SHORT STORIES

No. 774.] Week ending October 31st. 1903. [Price One Penny.

"Give me those papers, before I count ten, or—*your lover dies!*"

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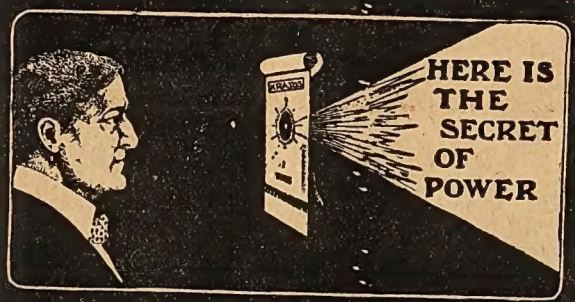
(*A Thrilling Incident from this week's "THE PURSUIT OF SARA." See inside.*)

SELF-HYPNOTISM



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Marvellous Blessing to Those who are Ruptured. Proofs so Positive and From Such Reliable Sources as to be Free From All Doubt.

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Finest quality and flavour.

COCOA

Nutritious and Economical.

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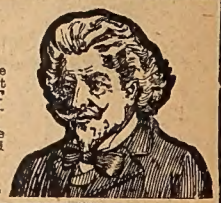

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SHORT STORIES.

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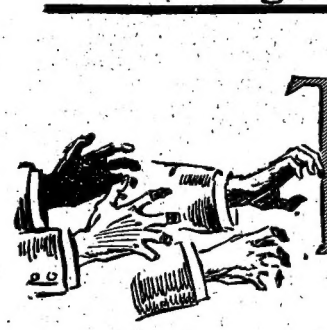
Fascinating New Series. **Start To-day.**



The Pursuit of Sara

For New Readers.

Miss Sara Gillespie, who is the relater of these experiences, found employment as a typine in the firm of Messrs. Templeton and Co., General Agents.

The partners in the firm, Mr. Templeton, Mr. Harrington Shackell, and Mr. Rigby Starr, treated Sara most courteously, especially the senior partner, who, before very long, induced her to tell him all about her absent lover, Noel Masterman.

The latter was by profession a doctor, but as he lacked the capital to start a practice in England, he had accepted the post of medical attendant to a friend, who was travelling on the Continent for the benefit of his health, and was at present in Nice.

Noel had been brought up by his uncle, Sir Francis Masterman, and had excellent prospects, but when he fell in love with Miss Gillespie, Sir Francis refused to have anything more to do with him.

Mr. Templeton assured Sara that he thought Noel had been very hardly treated, and suggested that the best thing for him to do would be to return, and he would see whether he could not obtain a practice for him.

Then one day Noel entered the office unexpectedly, and told his love he had had a wire from his cousin Herbert, saying that Sir Francis was not expected to live long. He had hastened from Nice in order to get his uncle's forgiveness before his death, only to find the Baronet already dead.

In his will, Noel's uncle had bequeathed him a thousand pounds, and with this he intended to buy a practice to which Mr. Templeton had recommended him.

One evening Noel and Sara paid a visit to Sir Herbert, and learnt from him that he had insured his life in favour of Templeton and Co. for fifteen thousand pounds. Just as they were leaving Sir Herbert's valet entered, and, with a cry of amazement, Sara asserted that he was Harrington Shackell, one of her employers. It was, however, explained that Shackell had a moustache, whereas the valet was clean shaven. With this explanation Miss Gillespie had to remain content.

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The following day Noel received a telegram summoning him back to Nice, and in order that he should be able to buy the practice in question, he gave the thousand pounds to Mr. Templeton, and signed a document authorising the firm to deal for him. By a piece of trickery, the senior partner converted this document into one authorising the firm to deal *with his whole estate.*

In the afternoon Sara overheard Templeton and Rigby Starr talking, and their words aroused her suspicions. She understands that Noel is heir to the Baronetcy, in the event of Sir Herbert having no children, and realises that, should Sir Herbert die, the firm has sole control of her lover's estate.

Just then Harrington Shackell entered, and she was shocked to hear him announce that Sir Herbert Masterman was dead—murdered by him, his valet! So, after all, her suspicions had been only too well grounded! Then, little by little, she heard the diabolical plot against her lover unfolded, and also the hint that she herself was in danger, as she was the only one the murderers had to fear, and they intended to run no risks.

Then she resolved on a bold scheme—to get possession of the notes and the document. Bursting into the room, she seized the precious papers and managed to elude her astounded employers. Then she fled.

Besides the £1,000 in notes, Sara had about five pounds of her own money with her.

She wired to Noel, bidding him return to England at once. Then Miss Gillespie took train to Bedford, where she expected to find an old school-friend, who, however, had gone.

Calling at the Post Office to see if there was a reply to her telegram from Noel, she was thunderstruck to hear someone else had called for the telegram.

Who *could* it be but Templeton and Co.?

Faint at heart, she made her way to the Park, where she met a prepossessing-looking nurse, who seemed in great trouble.

They arranged to meet in the evening, and did so. Strolling along, they came to Newnham Bridge. Suddenly the nurse made a cowardly attack on Sara, forcing her back into the waters. The river closed over—she was drowning!

The nurse's bonnet was thrown aside, and revealed the features of Rigby Starr!

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THE PURSUIT OF SARA

AT NORTHAMPTON.

The Horror on the Racecourse.

THE water filled my mouth, the pressure of Rigby's hand upon my throat thrust me down deeper and deeper. Then, as the world turned dark with the foretaste of death, the grip of his fingers suddenly relaxed; in his eagerness to destroy me, he had lost sight of his own safety. The ground on which he knelt, sodden with water, collapsed beneath his weight. He was pitched head foremost into the river and carried by the current some short distance down the stream. Released from the fearful pressure, I rose to the surface of the water. My fingers, almost within reach of the bank, clutched eagerly at the grass, the fallen leaves, the very stones; slight as was their support, it served to bring me closer into the shore. With a desperate effort, I grasped at the overhanging branches of the tree. The bough I caught was slender, it bent beneath my weight. Slowly and painfully I dragged myself towards the shore. Once it had almost snapped with the strain, and, poised over the black depths for a shuddering moment, I had thought to slip back. With a convulsive movement I raised myself and fell, gasping but saved, upon the shore.

By this time Rigby's shouts for help were ringing through the night. I could distinguish a dark object floating on the water, nearing by slow degrees the fatal weir.

His life against my safety and my lover's. For a moment I had wished him dead. The next, with a strange relief, I heard an answering shout, and caught sight of figures running down the bank, distinguished the splash of oars from a rescuing boat.

I did not wait for more, but staggered, borne down by my garments, heavy with water, to the other side of the road. There behind a friendly hedge, I took off my coat, shook the wet from my hat and hair, and tried to think out my next move.

The precious document and the packet of notes were safe. My ordeal had not been in vain; but with my teeth chattering and my limbs numb, even this consolation failed. I was ready to lie down and die by the roadside!

A forlorn and miserable object, I dragged myself to the middle of the road, and stood with uplifted hand to attract the attention of a passing cart. The driver stopped short when he saw me, and commented freely on my bedraggled condition.

"Been in the water, eh? So I *should* think. Whatever were you up to?"

Falteringly I explained that I had stumbled in the darkness, and narrowly escaped from death.

"I came down to spend the day with some friends," I continued mendaciously, "and when I got here I found they had left Bedford. I must go back to London to-night or I shall lose my situation. Could you help me?" I looked up at him appealingly. "Perhaps you live near; your wife might let me dry my clothes. I can't go to a hotel, I haven't enough money."

He considered for a moment and looked at his nice clean cart—it bore, I believe, the familiar name of Dudeney & Johnstone—and from his cart to where I stood, dripping and depressed.

"You're in a terrible state, missie," he said at last. "Still, I suppose I must help you. Come along up." And, leaning towards the ground, he gave me a friendly hoist to the seat beside him.

It seemed a long time before the cart drew up at a small house in Garfield Street; a very eternity before, a wordy argument with his good lady over, my friend conducted me to a neat, bright-looking kitchen. A comfortable meal was spread upon the table, the kettle was singing on the hob, and a cheery fire blazed in the grate. The housewife, a comely matron of about forty, relented when she saw me, assisted me to divest myself of my clothes, and, wrapping me in a huge garment of her own, sat me in an armchair by the fire until such time as they were dry.

St. Paul's was chiming half-past eleven when I left the house—the kind-hearted folk would not take a penny for their trouble—and walked up the High Street once again; my limbs were stiff and my head ached badly, but my courage had returned and I was ready to fight to the last gasp. I realised that it was imperative I should leave Bedford before the morning. I must abandon the chance of hearing from Noel. To run the risk of capture again and renew the experience of the evening would be madness. The next day would find the firm eager and alert. I could not hope to escape their clutches if I were still in the town.

I found the station deserted, the booking office closed, and the porters in a state of somnolence from which it was difficult to rouse them. I feared that the last train for—anywhere—had already left, but a severe cross-examination elicited the fact that a train from London for the North was due at—1.33 a.m. I had as yet formed no decision as to my next stopping-place. I did not wish to go too far afield from Bedford. The hope of claiming Noel's telegram, which I fondly pictured lying at the little stationer's, dissuaded me. I must select a town large enough to hide successfully from my persecutors, near enough to permit me to communicate with Sawyer's—the shop in the Midland Road.

I decided on Northampton, and learnt that if I took the 1.33 to Wellingborough I might catch an early morning train from there to my destination. The next two hours dragged very slowly. Alternately I paced the platform and the waiting-room, starting at every shadow, shuddering at every footfall.

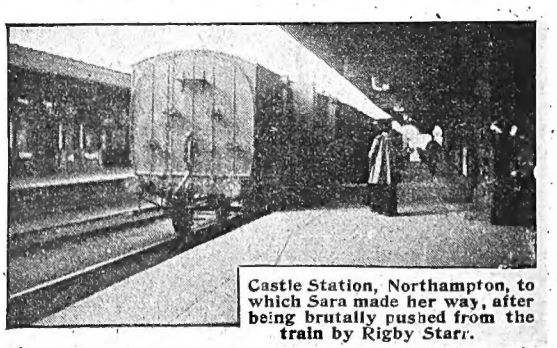
At length the station roused from silence, woke up to activity. The down train from London was due. I watched the few belated passengers alight, and envied them the comfortable homes, the warm and loving greetings which awaited them.

I hastily took my ticket, and, having claimed my packet of notes from the cloak-room, chose a carriage at the end of the train, and settled myself in the corner. The whistle sounded, the train began to move. I breathed a sigh of relief. I had defeated Templeton & Co.! I was leaving Bedford free, and with the papers still in my possession.

Another moment and we should have steamed out of the station. And then a figure darted across the platform, and, regardless of protesting porters and irate officials, swung into the nearest carriage. I had caught but a glimpse of the late passenger, but that glimpse had sent me sick with fear.

The man who jumped on to the train was Rigby Starr.

The train rushed through the night, a metallic roar rose from the glistening lines that marked its path. The throbbing of the engine, pulsating with energy, seemed to keep time to



Castle Station, Northampton, to which Sara made her way, after being brutally pushed from the train by Rigby Starr.

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The Drapery, Northampton, to which Sara wandered before she had recovered from the effects of her rough handling.

the beating of my heart. The carriage swayed from side to side; the dim lamp swung from the top, its faint beams falling on the huddled figure of a girl whose eyes, big with terror, looked from a small white face, whose hands wet with fear were convulsively enclasped.

What was that sound that rose above the rattle of the engine? A door banged farther down the train. I felt, rather than heard, soft, cautious steps upon the footboard, covering by painful, slow degrees the distance between my carriage and that other.

It was I, Sara, that those steps were approaching. It was I, that stealthy figure sought. I—weak, defenceless—that the bloodhound hunted. I heard, in fancy, those evil feet stop at my door; I saw, in fancy, a white face glare at me through the glass. A hand shot through the door, a hand that closed upon my throat with a relentless, murderous grip.

I started to my feet. Where could I hide, how could I escape? Under the seat—impossible, it would make the task easier for my assailant. Should I pull the danger cord to stop the train? I could not; if I summoned assistance I must offer explanation, and that would result in my incrimination.

Half mad with panic, I opened the door upon the other side, stepped through, and with the daring of desperation, turned my fingers round the handle, and crouched, half kneeling, on the footboard.

The whirr of the wheels deafen me, the jolting strains my muscles almost to tearing point. My eyes are dazed; the throbbing of the engine beats upon my brain.

And then the door upon the farther side is opened. The sound thrills me like the edge of a keen knife. The footfalls sound close. I sicken with a deadly nausea.

Will he never end his search? Each cushion has been overturned, the space under the seats examined.

Dear Heaven, surely he is going now?

He will not look through the window, nor open the door? He cannot dream I have escaped that way.

And then the window is darkened, his head cranes out, his face, his evil, mocking face, looks down on mine.

With a laugh he stoops and grasps my arm.

"I've got you now," he shouts, "you sha'n't escape this time!" and strikes at my wrists with all his force. "Let go, let go, you little fiend. You sha'n't escape this time, I say. Another minute and you'll be beneath the train, and the papers will be in my pocket. Let go."

The blows fall on my head, my arms, my hands. He twists my wrists, tearing by main force my fingers from the handle. In the struggle the door flies open. I am swung off the footboard, swung over the earth that rushes past with such velocity.

A moment and then—the door, the train, Rigby's white, wicked face are whirling in the distance, and I am left a quivering heap upon the ground!

At first I thought that I was going to die. Weak as a child, I had not the ability to move. I lay as I had fallen on a heap of gravel. My face was cut, my hands bleeding, but as yet I felt no pain; my heart seemed to have stopped beating. I was benumbed from head to foot.

The recollection of Rigby's threat stirred a desire for life within me. He had declared he would kill me, that dashed to pieces by the train the papers I had striven to guard would fall into his hands. Those papers, thank Heaven, were still safe, the touch of them seemed to help me. I wondered if he would stop the train and institute a search for me. It would be easy for him to trump up a tale of suicide.

Reflection convinced me he would adopt more cunning methods. There was some hours' interval between the 1.33 and the next train. There would be plenty of time for Rigby to get out at Wellingborough, the first stopping place, and walk back along the line until he found me—or as he hoped, my dead body. The train reached Wellingborough at 1.54. I judged it wanted ten minutes to that time. I might, therefore, expect the junior partner to return in something over half an hour. I could rest for a little while before I moved to safer quarters. Unless I had been injured in the fall, in which case I should still lie at his mercy.

Slowly I staggered to my feet. I could stand, my legs were not broken nor my arms, though my wrist was badly sprained. The movement stirred my blood, my body seemed to wake suddenly to a sense of pain. I ached and smarted all over, my nerves were jarred at every step. Ill as I felt, I did not realise at the time how close to death I'd been. Had I fallen on the bare ground I must have been killed. I should inevitably have broken my neck.

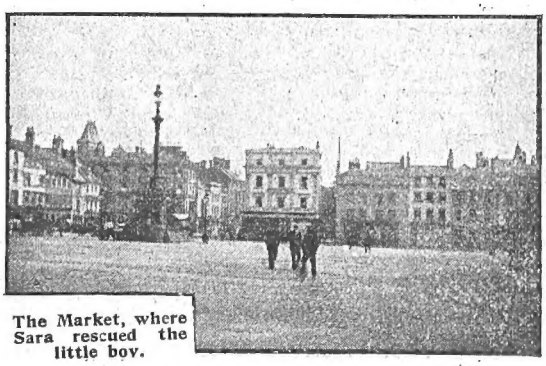
Gradually and with great pain, I stumbled along the line until I reached a gate opening into a field. It was padlocked, and at first seemed an insuperable obstacle. Somehow or other I clambered over, and walked, swaying to and fro, across the meadow, down a lane, and then into another field.

By this time I must have been light-headed. I remember fancying I was in the Strand with Noel at my side. The stars gave place to the electric lights, the spectral trees became shop fronts, the hedges the portals of a theatre.

Instinct must have led me to where, sheltered from the wind, there rose a hayrick. It had already been partially demolished and a lot of loose hay was scattered at the foot. Instinct again led me to gather up the soft, sweet-smelling stuff by armfuls, until I'd formed a fragrant heap. There, close to the rick, warmed by its scented heat, I rested, and thinking I was back once more in my Brixton lodgings, I fell asleep.

The sun was high in the heavens when I woke; the birds, lured into the belief that it was summer, sang their sweet songs until the neighbouring thicket thrilled with melody. The pain had left my limbs, my head was clear. I realised that, thanks to my youth and strength, I had passed safely through a dangerous crisis.

I found my way to a neighbouring farmhouse—removing first the straws hanging, Ophelia-like, about me—and purchased a slice of home-made bread and a long draught of



The Market, where Sara rescued the little boy.

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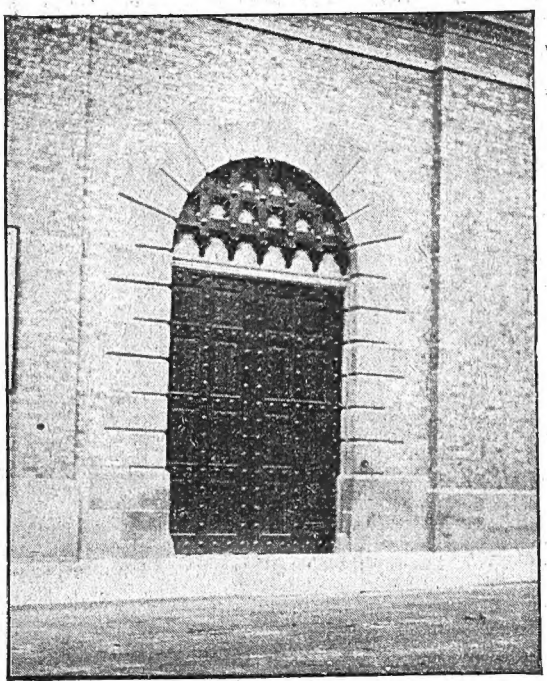

The Prison Gate, Northampton Gaol, where Sara first saw **the red-haired man.**

milk. The nearest station I was told was Elsham, a village a few miles from Kettering. By slow degrees I reached my goal, and after many changes and some long, dreary waits, found myself, at length, at the Castle Station, Northampton.

The platform was crowded, the bridge, which one had to cross to leave the station, thronged with passengers. I was jostled and pushed hither and thither, too weak and dazed to stem the current. I gave up my ticket, clasped mechanically in my hand, and then instinctively clutched at the pocket of my dress to reach my purse. It was not there!

The sickening feeling that came over me, the shiver of fear that seemed to run along my blood into my very fingertips, the sudden faintness that caught my heart! Penniless—it would be suicidal to try to cash one of Noel's notes—alone, in a strange place, barely recovered from one ordeal, how could I hope to face another?

The shock paralysed my faculties, I walked dazed and benumbed up Gold Street, not knowing nor caring where I went. The shock had been too great, I felt like a derelict tossed on a sea of circumstances.

I must have wandered about for hours before I found myself in a wide thoroughfare, lined with bright shops, busy with gazers into the well-stocked windows. The Drapery, as the townsfolk have christened this particular locality, is built on a gradual ascent. From Adnitt's, the Peter Robinson's of Northampton, I looked down on the square-towered church of All Saints, lit up by the noonday sun. The cool green trees that flank the building were restful to the eye, standing like sentinels, untroubled and serene, amidst the roar of traffic, the clatter of trams that circle round the church.

A town of sharp and vivid contrasts; a jumble of fine buildings, mean dwellings, splendid thoroughfares, squalid streets. Its people marked by fierce individuality, vigour of life, a scorn of bearing, an immense impatience of control.

Something of this I realised as I walked down the hill towards the church, leaving the fashions of the Drapery and Adnitt's tall electric lamps behind.

From the Drapery I made my way into the market, a huge square, shut in by large and for the most part unprepossessing buildings. A fine site, and on market day cheerful with the hum of buyers and sellers, busy with rows and rows of stalls. But on that morning it wore an empty, almost forlorn appearance. The shops seemed void of custom, the pavement of life. It was an oasis of silence in a desert of sound. A few stragglers loitered in the roadway, towards Sheep Street, a knot of factory girls, neat in white aprons and sailor hats, were gossiping.

Suddenly the silence was broken in strange, dramatic fashion. The wild inspiriting clatter of horses' hoofs upon the cobble stones, the jingle of harness, the shouts of the crowds, gathered as if by magic, proclaimed the coming of a fire-engine. In an instant the upper end of the market square was thronged. Shopmen left their customers, operatives curtailed their dinner hour, street boys appeared as from the ground beneath their feet.

Nearer and nearer came the inspiring jangle; swept by the crowd I stood eager as any, on the kerb-stones.

As the engine turned the corner, from the group of factory girls, there broke a curly-headed mite of five or six. Wild with delight he shouted, waving his cap, dancing with joy within the path of the galloping horses.

I stood the nearest to the child, and automatically responded to the exigencies of the situation. Like a flash I darted from the kerbstone, and plucked the child from under the horses' hoofs. For a second I stood dazed, and then, even as the horses and the men, aye, and the very engine seemed falling on me, I was pulled back, an arm was thrown about my neck, and I stood the centre of a crowd of cheering men and tearful women.

"He's my brother," said a dark-haired girl, her face ashen, her voice trembling. "I couldn't ha' lived if he'd been killed." She didn't thank me—in words—but gazed, a world of gratitude in her brown eyes.

"It's nothing," I said feebly, "nothing," and then the market seemed to rise, the statue in the middle to topple, the houses to shake, and I remembered nothing more.

Propped up against the knees of a fat and friendly market woman, I opened my eyes, a strong taste of brandy in my mouth—to find myself the centre of a friendly crowd. The dark-haired operative stooping over me, lifted me gently to my feet.

"You're a stranger, my dear?" said the market woman.

I nodded and clung to the slim figure that supported me.

"You'd best come home with me and rest a bit," she said; and spoke in such a kindly voice, and with such evident desire for my consent, that I could not demur. I felt as some poor traveller in a desert to whom a helping hand is suddenly extended from a bush of thorns.

Home—the word brought tears to my eyes. Home—I gratefully linked my arm in hers, and buoyed up with a sense of security, managed to walk to the corner of Abingdon Street, where we took a tram.

Some short distance up the road, my friend signalled for the tram to stop. We alighted at Wood Street, a wider and more picturesque turning than the majority of streets, where the workers of the Midlands have their homes. Profoundly depressing are those rows and rows of two-storeyed red-brick dwellings, which, without a pretence of forecourt, open right to the street.

Bald, and staring, without distinction, and lacking all possibility of privacy, the monotonous, barefaced structures—alike in every town throughout the Midlands—lack all that should be present in the dwellings of the people. The giant factories that consume the workers' health and strength, have left a mark upon their very souls, slowly but surely grinding out all longing, all desire for lovely things.

Maggie Dunkley lived at the top of Wood Street, on the right-hand side, going to Campbell Square. The house was overgrown with creeper, the windows, draped with clean white curtains, were bright with flowers. Her mother, an apple-cheeked woman, with brown hair touched with silver, accorded me a cordial welcome. The news of her boy's rescue had already reached her, and she was overflowing

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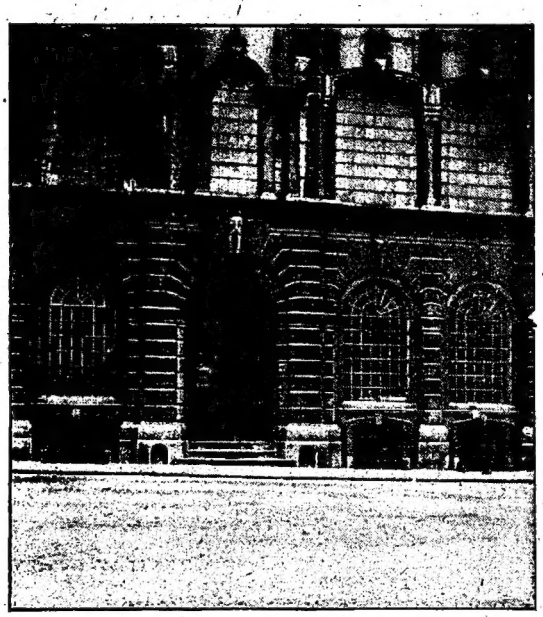

Cooper's Factory, where Sara applied for a situation.

with hospitable intent. She was somewhat anxious, however, as to who and what I was; and but for her daughter would have embarked on a kindly but thorough cross-examination. Maggie, however, nipped her intention short, and taking me up to her room, helped me into bed.

"You shall tell us to-morrow," she said, when I tried to explain my forlorn condition. "No money?" her kindly face flushed with sympathy. "Never mind, you're with friends." And, with a soft kiss on my cheek, she left me to a long, deep sleep—the first since my escape from Templeton and Co.'s London offices.

It was to Maggie's kindly ears I told my history, as much, that is to say, as I thought wise. The notes I did not mention. I had grown chary of trusting strangers. She was sufficiently quick-brained to understand the salient points of my narrative, and enthusiastic in her admiration for my pluck in fighting Noel's enemies. I explained that I had no money, and no means of getting any until I had a letter from my sweetheart, but she overruled all objections to my staying, and promised to do her best to find me employment if I did not hear from Noel within a week or two.

I wrote two letters that afternoon, one to Noel, telling him all that had occurred since we had parted, and another to Mr. Tenant, his patient. I addressed both to Nice, hoping that if Noel's failed to find him, the other would reach its destination.

Maggie at my intreaty took a journey to Bedford to inquire for letters or wires at Sawyer's, but the errand was fruitless. Noel had sent no word. It remained for me, then, to wait for my lover and to guard against Templeton and his two partners.

The time passed quickly and not unpleasantly in the house of the virginia creeper. Mrs. Dunkley was glad of my assistance in the house, and did not seem to grudge me a home. Her husband, at work at a shoe factory, was a quiet but not unkindly person. The other members of the family were Maggie, a "fitter" in the same factory as her father, and Dick, the curly-headed urchin whose life had been so nearly ended in the market place.

As day followed day and none of the firm made their appearance, I was lulled into a sense of security; but for my fear for Noel, the gnawing anxiety I felt for news from him, I had been almost content. When, however, at the end of the week no news had come, I felt it was time to bestir myself. I could no longer intrench on the Dunkley's hospitality. I must get work. Maggie's endeavours on my behalf not being successful, I determined to apply myself.

To this end one sunny morning I set out for Cooper's factory. At the top of Wood Street on the way to Campbell Square, there stands Northampton Gaol. The walls, tall and grim, tower above one's head, so high they stand that the mind cannot scale the barrier set between the world of silence and the world of life. The prison gate, Fate's doorway, through which, how many children of despair have passed, lay dark and stern, a blot upon the sunshine of the day. It had a fascination for me this same door; often I stood, my ears filled with the sound of laughter as the hurrying factory hands swept past, my eyes dazzled with the brightness of the clear, cold sky, till gazing at the portals I had shuddered.

If it should be my fate to cross that threshold; if my enemies, relentless in their pursuit, should trace me, capture and cast me into that place of death!

As I gazed the little wicket on the right hand of the prison door was opened. A man looked out upon the world; not a warder nor yet a prisoner, though I doubt if there were in the prison one whose face bespoke such guilt. I did not know the man, I had not seen his face before. Lean and cadaverous, his long, thin face was pointed, his eyes—small, crafty eyes—set close together in his head. His hair of a red, so vivid as to touch scarlet, lay in a peak upon his forehead, like—like, yes—like a stain of blood.

My fixed regard attracted him; as his gaze met mine, I felt as if some evil thing had looked at me, a moment his eyes remained on mine, the next his face had disappeared, the wicket closed.

With a sigh of relief I turned away. Alas! that face was doomed to play a large part in my destiny.

After that afternoon my feeling of security came quickly to an end.

Arrived at Cooper's factory, I interviewed the manager and pleaded hard for work.

He shook his head, regarding me, I thought, contemptuously.

"You are too old for an apprentice," he said, "and too untrained for a worker. I don't suppose you can work a machine?"

"I could learn," I faltered. "I'm not stupid."

"I'm afraid I can't hold out any hopes," he replied. "All our workers are apprenticed quite young—just after they leave school."

Dispirited by my lack of success, I asked if I might go into the workroom and see Maggie. It was close on five o'clock, near the hour of dismissal. I felt that a walk with my friend and kind companion might cheer me up.

Having gained permission, I sped up the winding staircase, past rooms heavy with the scent of leather—brown, black, and faint coloured fawns. Huge piles representing thousands of pounds were waiting to be converted into shooting, walking, golfing—every kind of boot; past the cutters' room, where Maggie's father worked, packed full of men, young, old, and middle-aged, their eyes glued to their work, their shoulders bowed with stooping. Into the machinists' room, where the whirr of revolving wheels made the brain giddy. Young girls of seventeen and under, guiding with incredible dexterity the heavy leather that the needle pierced so easily; matrons, mothers of families, working machines even more complicated, and here and there a faded little woman shrivelled and wizened to the colour of the leather that she held. In the "fitters'" room I discovered Maggie; above the clang of the hammer her laughter rang out. Her face fresh as a flower, with damask cheeks and clear brown eyes, glanced up at me.

In a few words I explained my errand. She smilingly agreed to my request that she should leave, and a few minutes later, after a hasty cup of tea, we were hurrying down Abingdon Street, to look at the shops.

We studied the windows intently, admiring the hats in Adnitt's, the dress materials in Cole and Hughes. Maggie was a managing soul; her earnings, some sixteen shillings weekly, she husbanded carefully, the greater part being deposited each week in a savings' bank.

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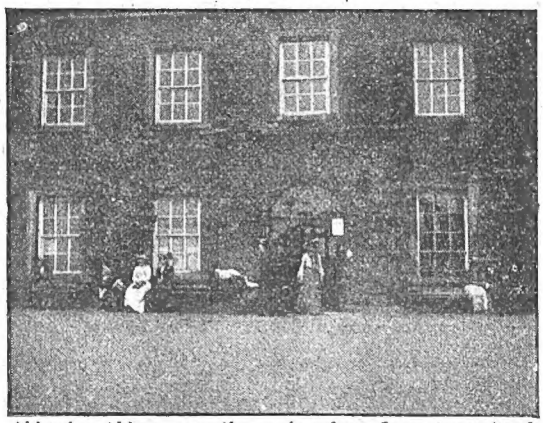
She decided that afternoon, however, to purchase a new gown, and to that end collected a large number of patterns. By the time we had selected the ones we preferred, the evening had set in. The streets immediately about the market were thronged with work girls, shouting, laughing in high spirits. At the corner of Guild Hall Street we encountered a neatly-dressed, horsey-looking man.

Maggie turned crimson when she met his eyes.

"It's my young man," she whispered, and the next minute was clinging closely to his arm. It seemed to me a time when my absence would be more appreciated than myself. I shook hands with the horsey gentleman, and murmuring something about "shopping," moved off in a contrary direction; up the street, towards Abingdon Square, past troops of operatives, with here and there a young man in their midst, clean-shaven, gaitered, horsey from head to foot. Through the square itself, with its desolate looking People's Café that flanks the statue of Charles Bradlaugh, dauntless and unafraid, the genius of the Northampton people. Whether the statue be a fine one or not it is impossible for me to say. During my stay in the town it was invariably surrounded by barrows bearing advertisement placards setting forth the attractions of the Music Hall. It was strange to catch a glimpse of that earnest, powerful face rising above letters a foot high proclaiming that "Joe Elvin's" performance was unrivalled!

I was too tired to walk further that afternoon, and the trams, crowded with folks, did not appeal to me. I retraced my steps, taking a short cut through the Guild Hall from Abingdon Street. Half way down the corridor I ran against an individual coming in the opposite direction. Glancing up, I recognised the man I had seen that afternoon at the prison gate. Murmuring an apology, I hastened on; to my discomfort, he turned round and followed me. In a sudden panic I rushed on at full speed, flying down the steps of the Hall, and falling almost into Maggie's arms.

"Help me," I said wildly. "I'm—I'm frightened. Look," and I pointed to the man with the scarlet hair regarding us from the top of the steps.



Abingdon Abbey, near the park, where Sara encountered Shackleton cunningly disguised.

"He's not pretty to look at, certainly," said Jim Goodman, Maggie's sweetheart. "Would you like me to go for him, missie?"

"Oh, no," I urged. "Let us get home. I can't bear to be near him," and much to Mr. Goodman's disappointment we set off for Wood Street, the groom, for that I discovered was Jim's calling, enlivening our way with descriptions of certain fights in which, by all accounts, he had not played the part of a spectator.

He left us at the door with many expressions of good-will towards me, and offers "to go for" any man I liked to name.

That night I could not rest. Every sound resolved itself into footsteps, each gust of wind seemed to me like a voice—my enemy's voice crying for my destruction.

Next morning I confided to Maggie that I carried with me bank notes for a thousand pounds. I felt I could no longer bear the weight of the secret all alone.

"If you really think the red-haired chap means trouble, you ought not to walk about with the notes upon you," she said thoughtfully. "You say you've cut 'em in halves? Well, you keep one packet, I'll hide the other here under this board in the floor."

It struck me as a primitive hiding place, but, failing a better, I took advantage of it, and deposited the packet under the loose plank by my bed.

I was up early that morning, straining my eyes down the street to catch a glimpse of the postman.

"No letters?" I asked, my heart torn with fear and hope.

"Not this time," was the answer, and the man, unconscious arbiter of life and death, passed on.

In the afternoon of the same day, I took Dick up to Abingdon Park, where it was arranged that Maggie and her lover should meet us later on. It was a lovely afternoon, the old Abbey girdled with trees, cloaked with ivy, towered up straight and tall against the clear blue sky. I sat down on one of the seats provided by a thoughtful corporation, and, keeping Dick well in sight, waited for my friends.

Maggie and Jim arrived a full hour before I had expected. I gave Dick into their charge, and declining an invitation to accompany them, gave myself up to reverie. If only I could see Noel but for a moment! I hungered for him, my soul cried out for a touch of his dear hand. The tears forced their way to my eyes and a lump rose in my throat.

"Noel," I whispered, "Noel."

As if in answer to my call a step sounded on the gravel path. Hoping I do not know what wild feverish thing, I turned, and met the gaze of the man I had seen at the prison door!

He was taller than I had thought at first, and his shoulders were broad, his build powerful. I rose from my seat and hastened from the Park, not pausing until the echo of his steps, pursuing me, had died away.

I left the Park by the nearest gate. It led into a fine wide thoroughfare, lined with well-built houses standing in ample gardens, it is a pleasant suburb and a growing one.

Some distance down the road I passed a pair of large iron gates through which I caught a glimpse of trees and flowers and a broad carriage drive. The lodge, overgrown with green, was picturesque enough to make me pause.

Looking up I scanned the windows, neatly draped with spotless muslin. One I noticed particularly, was framed with creeper, kissed by the autumn into blushing red, looking exquisitely pretty.

"What is this place?" I asked a passer-by.

"It's an asylum," was the answer, "*a lunatic asylum?*"

I gave a start—flowers, open windows, fresh green trees—the place did not present the appearance one associates with a madhouse. I wondered if the inmates were all mad; it might be some were the victims of a conspiracy as cruel as that which parted me from Noel. I glanced again towards the window of the lodge and watched until, as if in response to my scrutiny, someone approached. A hand lifted the window higher, a black-coated arm appeared upon the sill, and then a head and shoulders filled the aperture. For a second I gazed, breathless with fear and hope. Then, with a scream that brought the people to their doors, I flung myself upon the iron gates.

It was Noel who looked at me from the window. His dear face that gazed at me. Noel, *Noel!*—a prisoner in a madhouse!

"Come out!" I shrieked, and then gripping the iron bars, clanged the bell, appealing with wild cries for help!

The window was shut down, Noel taken away, perhaps—the thought was madness—to a padded room, where bound and gagged he would endure the horrors of torture both physical and mental!

Again and yet again I shook the gates, until the sound of approaching wheels aroused me from my passion. A brougham drew up outside the house. A tall, professional-looking man whose air and manner proclaimed him to be a

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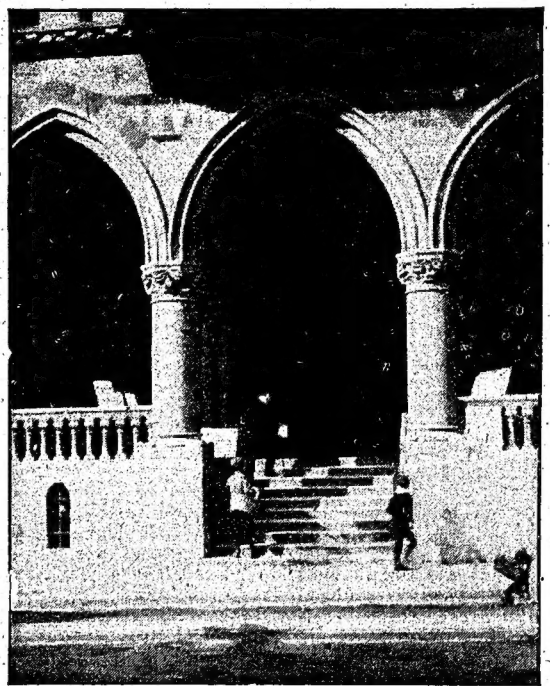
doctor alighted on the path, close to his heels a second man stepped out; the red-headed individual who had caused me such alarm.

"We're in good time after all, Dr. Anesley," he said.

Anesley! The name awoke a thousand recollections. The doctor whose practice Noel had wished to buy was called Anesley. Doubtless he, like Noel, had been duped by the firm of Templeton & Co. He would help me, help my lover. It was a veritable stroke of fortune that had sent him to me at this crisis.

"Doctor, I want your help. My sweetheart, Noel Masteman, the man who was in treaty for your practice through the agencyof Templeton & Co. is in that place"—and I shook my fist towards the lodge. "You don't know me; I'm Sara Gillespie, the girl to whom he is engaged. I was employed as typine in their office at St. Helens. I discovered they were plotting against Noel; I discovered they had murdered, *murdered* his cousin, and that—"

With a gesture the doctor stopped my flow of eloquence.



The Guild Hall, where Sara fled from the man she saw at the prison gate.

"What proof have you that Mr. Masterman is here?" he asked.

"I have seen him in that room"—and I pointed to the window framed in rich red leaves.

"Doctor," I clasped my hands about his arms. "Let him come to me; he is not mad; dear Heaven, you know he is not mad!"

He gazed at me with kind, compassionate eyes, then, signing to his companion to withdraw, led me aside.

"Now," he said quickly; "if I'm to be of help you must control yourself. You tell me Mr. Masterman is at the lodge. If that is the case, I, as one of the physicians of the establishment, will inquire the reason of his detention there. It is, however, possible," his voice sank almost to a whisper, "that he's there for purposes of investigation. Others beside yourself my dear young lady, have reason to suspect Messrs. Templeton & Co. You must understand their influence is far-reaching. Mr. Templeton, in fact, is one of the trustees of the asylum. I cannot openly question his doings; it is a matter for diplomacy."

"Meantime——" I interrupted.

"Have no fear, Miss Gillespie; I will help you to the best of my ability. I will call at the lodge, see Mr. Masterman, and ascertain the reason for his detention. If he is kept there by the agency of Mr. Templeton I will on my own responsibility release him. If, as I suspect, he is there to keep an eye on the head of the firm, I will ask him to send you a message to that effect."

His words were plausible, his manner kind. I yielded to his persuasions and consented to remain *outside* the lodge gates until I heard from him or Noel.

"That man," I said, pointing to the red-headed person, "I mistrust him; who is he?"

"A keeper in the asylum," the doctor replied. "He is devoted to me, and takes special interest in my own particular cases."

"I saw him at the gate of the prison the other day."

"Quite possible; his brother is a warder in the gaol."

He smiled the gentle, persuasive smile of the medical man. I yielded to his influence, and watched him and his familiar through the iron gates, waiting, hungry of heart outside.

Within five minutes the scarlet-headed man appeared. My own locks being more of red than auburn, it may seem peculiar that his hair should have inspired me with such a feeling of revulsion. The explanation lies, I think, in the fact that his head was sleek and smooth (my hair is very curly), his skin of leaden hue, his face, his figure, redolent of craft and cunning—a very Judas.

"I am to tell you," he commenced in a gruff voice, which to my fancy sounded like the grating of a prison door, "I am to tell you that Mr. Masterman is watching over your interests and his own. He dare not see you now. Were he to try and leave the place it would excite Templeton's suspicions."

"Where's Templeton?" I gasped, "not here?"

"He is at present seated with the Board in company with Dr. Anesley."

"But is Noel a—a—— Is he thought to be *mad?*" I asked.

"He was received here on Templeton's recommendations and by the certificate of two doctors as a patient. His cleverness helped him to escape and remain concealed in the lodge. That same ability will enable him with my help to leave the place to-morrow morning, when he will join you."

"Where?" I asked, my heart beating wildly, "where?" In my enthusiasm I was ready to smile upon the man of the prison gate.

"You are to meet him on the racecourse by the grand stand at five o'clock in the morning. That, and no other is the hour when he can in safety see you. Will you be there?"

He looked at me nonchalantly, not by so much as the flicker of an eyelid did he reveal the anxiety which he must have felt.

"I will come," I answered. Then: "Can you take a note from me to—to—Mr. Masterman?"

"Better not," he answered, shaking his head. "It will excite suspicion."

Somehow the answer reassured me. I felt reproached at the disgust the man's personality had inspired in me, and at the conclusion of the interview felt constrained to thank him for his kindness!

Maggie was not enthusiastic when on my return to the house in Wood Street, I told her what had happened.

"You should have hammered and hammered at the gate until he came to you," she said, "I could not have left Jim in a madhouse were it ever so."

"But Noel sent a message to me," I remonstrated, "saying I must wait. Don't you see, Maggie, there's so much at stake. We have to bring these people to justice, to——"

"I reckon you want *him* most of all," she interrupted, "so long as I had my lad I'd let the others—rip."

With which illogical conclusion she ended the discussion.

Next morning before the dawn lightened the darkness of the sky I was astir. Something, I know not what, a premonition of menace, a foretaste of danger, made me rouse my sleeping bedfellow.

"I'm afraid to take these with me, Maggie," I said softly, thrusting my packet of banknotes and the paper that Noel had signed into her hands; "keep them for me. If all is well, Noel and I will come together and reclaim them, if not——"

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"If you're not here by seven o'clock I shall know there's mischief," she interrupted. "Even now, I'm loth to let you go alone. I wish I had told father," she paused; "anyway, Jim knows." She smiled at the mention of her sweetheart's name, and, linking her arms about my neck, wished me "good luck" with all her heart.

The streets, dim and ghost-like in the grey morning, struck a chill to my heart. Abingdon Street, void of trams and traffic, empty of pedestrians, seemed like a churchyard. Wellingborough Road, shrouded in mist, was to my excited fancy peopled with ghosts. The trees made shuddering noises; through the white vapours the funnel-shaped steeple of the church built by a healthy brewer—dubbed by the irreverent Spillsby's "Fire-escape," formed a landmark. I groped my way until the racecourse, ghostly and deserted, loomed before me. I leant against the palings that fence the grand stand and waited, heart and brain on the alert to catch the sound of anyone approaching. Gradually the mists dispersed, the course lay clear before me. In fancy I conjured up phantoms of the steeds, the jockeys who had ridden to the winning post. Scarlet and green and blue, the jackets passed before me mounted on satin-skinned thoroughbreds, darting like arrows from a bow.

What fortunes had been made and lost on this same course! How many eyes had craned to follow the horse which bore the last hopes of a spendthrift; how many voices had been raised to greet the victor as he swept by!

The place, no longer desolate and lonely, was to me thronged with the tragedies, the comedies that are enacted on a race-course.

Far, far as the eye could reach the white posts reared themselves upon the soft green sward; in the background a line of hills, mystic, wonderful, made the sky line. In the near distance a row of houses, spectral in the dawning, turned blind eyes towards me.

Of a sudden a shaft of light crept rapidly across the horizon. In its beams I distinguished a group of men approaching me. Filled with apprehension I hastened towards them. I had taken but ten paces in their direction, when from the grey mist that enveloped me, I felt a hand upon my shoulder, another on my wrist.

I was held fast—immovable.

Struggling, I turned my head. The men who held my arms were strange to me.

"Keep quiet," said a low voice, "and we won't harm you. It's no use to struggle, you'll only hurt yourself."

The figures I had first observed were rapidly approaching. A tall man, gagged and bound, led by two others; a third walked at their side; a fourth in advance.

The latter came quickly to where I stood. I seemed to recognise in him the man of the prison door.

"Where is Noel Masterman?" I called, struggling with frantic efforts to release myself.

"Here!" And he pointed to the figure bound and gagged behind him.

"You," I commenced. With a gesture he cut me short.

"Look," he said, and, raising his hat, he made a mocking bow. "Look at me, Miss Gillespie. Do you not know me—now?"

He thrust his face—his hateful mocking face—into mine. The red hair, that like a stain of blood had marked his forehead, the leaden-coloured skin, the narrow brow, were gone—gone—and in their place there looked at me the murderous face of Shackleton!

"You're very clever, Miss Gillespie," he said derisively. "But this time we have you *tight*. There is your lover," he pointed with a gesture of contempt to Noel. "And now"—his thin lips twitched with eagerness—"you must make your choice. Tell me where I shall find the paper and the notes or——" he paused, throwing up his hands. At the signal the man who walked near to my lover drew out a pistol, and held it to Noel's head.

"Speak," cried Shackleton, "or——" and his gesture said the rest.

"I give you ten seconds to make up your mind. The papers are not on you; that I know. Say where they are, and your lover's life is spared. Refuse, and, by Heaven, he shall die!"

My throat grew parched, my tongue clung to my palate. I tried to think, tried to evolve a plausible tale that would deceive him, so that I need not confess that the papers were in Maggie Dunkley's hands. He simply dared not murder Noel before my eyes. He——

"One!" counted Shackleton, and the earth went round me at the sound.

"Two!" Gasping, I babbled out a tale of having buried notes and papers up in Abingdon Park. It sounded wild, improbable, to my own ears, to his it was mere balderdash.

Fear, as the torturers of long ago well knew, deprives the imagination of all power to invent, the mind to all strength to conceive. The victim under the strain of torture is driven back upon the naked truth. He cannot lie.

"Three!" Must I tell him? I might surely trust Maggie to keep faith, and yet on my silence hung my future and my lover's. They dare not kill him?

"Herbert Masterman died," said Shackleton, reading my thoughts, "why not Noel?"

"You will not have him killed," I gasped, "if—if——"

"I will spare his life," he answered, "if you confess. Then, marking the irresolution still upon my face, snapping his fingers. "Four, five, six!" he cried.

My eyes searching the plain espied a horseman galloping towards me. Close on his heels ran a figure, strong, alert. Were they coming to help me and Noel? Had Maggie, fearing foul play, flown to my aid?

Why could I not invent a colourable lie to gain time, until they arrived? If I could hold his attention, if I could keep back the seconds that he counted with such fiendish joy!

"Help," I screamed, throwing my voice towards the horseman.

"Eight," said Shackleton, and the trigger of the pistol held to Noel's head was raised.

The horseman spurring his steed drew nearer.

"Nine! Is he to die?" cried Shackleton.

I tried to answer, but my voice was strangled in my throat. Only a hoarse murmur came from my lips. I could not speak, I could not even make a sign.

A second, but a second, and my love must die!

Ten—and the fatal shot was to be fired!

(Sara Relates her Adventure at Leicester Next Week.)

Arthur Applin's New Story,

"THE GAMBLE OF LIFE,"

Has Just Started in

Pearson's Weekly.

One Penny. Every Friday.

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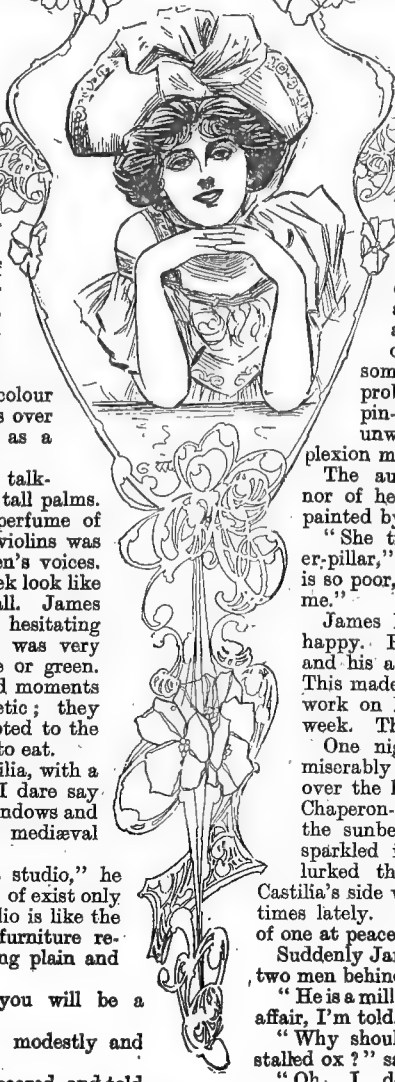
A ROSE-LEAF PRINCESS.



Relating the Mistake She Made.

HER name was Susan Anna, but her lover re-christened her Castilia. If he had been a plumber or a paper-hanger he would probably have called her his "black-eyed Susan"; but he was a poet and an artist, even if his name was James Henry Perkins, so he named her Castilia, and told himself that her eyes were the colour of a mountain lake when the storm hangs over it, and her hair was as densely black as a moonless midnight.

They met at an afternoon tea, and sat talking in a little shaded alcove behind some tall palms. The atmosphere was heavy with the perfume of roses, and the tremulous music of the violins was broken by the thin, airy treble of women's voices.

A red-shaded lamp made Castilia's cheek look like a peach on the south side of a sunny wall. James Henry told her so with a delightful, hesitating boldness, and she blushed divinely and was very glad that the lamp-shade was not blue or green. They discovered in those ten undisturbed moments that they were absolutely sympathetic; they worshipped the same authors, were devoted to the same actors, and adored the same things to eat.

"Fancy you being an artist," said Castilia, with a fascinating note of awe in her voice. "I dare say you have a lovely studio, with painted windows and rusty armour, and old tapestry and mediæval chairs."

Perkins smiled cynically. "I have a studio," he answered, "but the properties you speak of exist only in the imagination. The light in my studio is like the strict truth, crude and hard, and my furniture resembles the tale of Mark Antony in being plain and unvarnished."

"Ah, yes," sympathetically. "But you will be a great artist some day."

"I hope so. I mean to be," he said, modestly and firmly.

At this moment the Paternal Friend appeared, and told Castilia that her Chaperon-Aunt desired her presence immediately. The Paternal Friend was a very charming man, by the way, but James Henry hated him on the spot.

For several days after this James Henry saw nothing of Castilia; but it happened that Castilia could not easily forget the man who had so plainly given her to understand that he thought her lovely. She reflected that for a long time she really had been intending to have her portrait painted, and she was quite sure that Mr. Perkins had a great deal of talent, not that she had any especial interest in him, but she was so weary of frivolous and empty-headed Society people, that it was very pleasant to meet an interesting and companionable man.

When James Henry was made aware of this decision of Castilia, he promptly turned his great historic picture to the wall. He would, for a season, cease chasing the will-o'-the-wisp—Fame—and paint the droop of Castilia's eye-lids and the curves of her lovely mouth.

Castilia did not find him so companionable as she had hoped during the sittings. For one thing, he looked at her with a certain critical, professional gleam in his eyes, and for another, he scarcely talked to her at all, and it was very tiresome sitting in one position so long, but she obtained some consolation from the reflection that he probably stood in awe of her aunt, a vast, pin-cushiony woman, with a skin so white and unwrinkled that it instantly suggested complexion masks and an unfeeling heart.

The aunt did not approve of James Henry nor of her niece's wild idea of having her portrait painted by an obscure young artist.

"She treats him as though he were a c-c-caterpillar," sobbed Castilia upon her pillow, "and he is so poor, so deserving, so m-m-much in love with me."

James Henry, in the meantime, was miserably happy. He was desperately in love with Castilia, and his affection he knew was absolutely hopeless. This made him miserable. He was doing excellent work on her portrait, and he saw her twice a week. These facts made him happy.

One night when he was feeling particularly miserably happy, he went to the opera. Glancing over the house, he saw Castilia in a box with the Chaperon-Aunt. She wore a gown that was like the sunbeams veiled in mist, and shining stones sparkled in her dark hair. In the background lurked the detested Paternal Friend, and by Castilia's side was a man James Henry had seen many times lately. He was florid and stout, and had the air of one at peace with the world and himself.

Suddenly James Henry's quick ear caught her name; two men behind him were speaking of her.

"He is a millionaire—made money by mining—definite affair, I'm told."

"Why should she yoke herself unequally with that stalled ox?" said the other man.

"Oh, I don't know. Money always marries money."

James Henry levelled his glass at the chorus, but it was a confused blur; he paid no heed to the *prima donna*, although she was singing divinely. After the curtain fell he rose and left the house.

He was now obliged to confess to himself that unless Castilia returned his love, life would not be worth living; but he had no reason to suppose that she did; and what had he, who was just beginning to make his name known, to offer her? It was by reason of these inward cogitations that James Henry became acquainted with the chill, grey dawn which crept through the windows each morning and greeted his sleepless eyes.

"Oh, Mr. Perkins, are you ill, or have you had bad news?" faltered Castilia, at her next sitting.

"I am not ill," said James Henry coldly. He looked towards the Chaperon-Aunt, who had fallen into a gentle doze; then he blundered desperately, "but—but—I am going far away."

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"Going away! Why are you going far away?" cried Castilia, with a sob in her voice.

"Because I love you, Castilia, with all my soul; because I will not be so selfish and cowardly as to ask you to marry me, when I have nothing to offer you, so I am leaving you forever."

"Nothing to offer! Leaving me forever!" exclaimed Castilia, with honest scorn and amazement. "You don't regard my feelings in the matter," she said inarticulately, "and—and"—impulsively—"I love you, James Henry, just as much as you love me."

The pincushiony Chaperon-Aunt opened her eyes on a prettier tableau than she had ever seen on the stage, but she was a very unromantic person, and she expressed her opinion in very strong terms. She was only one, however, and her opposition did not count for much.

So Castilia and James Henry were married, and fancied that they were destined to live in a state of ideal bliss ever after—only they did not.

In the first place, James Henry was a very ambitious man and absorbed in his work, and Castilia, instead of being properly delighted at his industry, was offended, for she was young and foolish and exacting.

The artist sat many hours in his studio, and when the light faded, and he could no longer paint, he thought much of his work, and was often pre-occupied and absent-minded; and Castilia was firmly convinced that he had ceased to love her, and sought once more the society she had characterised as frivolous and empty-headed.

Her portrait was finished in time for the Academy, and all London rushed to see it, and went into raptures over it.

And Castilia was very, very proud of him, but she would not tell him so. "He would think it's only because he's become famous."

"She might have said one little word of appreciation, and not have been so utterly, heartlessly indifferent," thought James Henry bitterly.

When Castilia's portrait was brought home the best light was found in her sitting-room, so there it was hung, where she could sit and watch it by the hour. And how she grew to hate it!

Really, it was Castilia at her best, her beautiful, Spanish, haughty best. Some one had called it the portrait of a rose-leaf princess; and, indeed, her lovely face stood out, flowerlike, from the warm shadow of velvets and furs.

She often apostrophised her portrait ungratefully. "You hateful thing," she would cry, "I don't want to be 'a rose-leaf princess,' I—I'm a woman, and I want to be loved."

Just about this time, Perkins began to paint the portrait of a very charming woman, older than Castilia by some years. She had a mobile face, wonderful light eyes, changeful as the sea, and masses of light hair; and she was very witty and fascinating. Castilia hated her, especially when James Henry expressed his opinion that to paint her portrait so as to do her justice was the work of a lifetime; for she was variable as the winds, and her wonderful play of expression mirrored every mood.

His artist's soul was pained because Castilia would not see her beauty.

"Beauty!" she scornfully exclaimed, "I should think her bones would make holes in her dresses, poor creature! and she looks as old as the hills with that sallow, faded complexion."

She became more and more dissatisfied with her own portrait. Sometimes she felt that she would like to burn it. Why had James Henry given her that arrogant expression, which seemed to say, "Behold me! I am an heiress!" She wished she hadn't a penny.

One evening she strolled into the dimly-lit room, where her husband sat dreaming before the fire. Resting one arm on the mantelshelf, she looked curiously down upon him. "He's thinking of that horrid creature," was her jealous fancy.

"Tell me, James, dear," she said, "what is the best thing in the world?"

"The best thing in the world?" he said dreamily. "Why, freedom, I suppose."

That was enough. She turned and left him. "You poor thing!" she said to her portrait as she passed it. "You poor thing," she repeated, meaning herself.

"Why, Susie," said the Paternal Friend, who had just been admitted, "in the dark, and in tears? Is the world hollow, and your doll stuffed with sawdust?"

"I'm crying," she said meekly; "I—I—was just crying."

"I see. Shedding a few tears for want of something better to do," jestingly.

"I'll tell you why," she said desperately: "I hate that portrait of myself—I loathe it. I can't stay in the same room with it!"

"Send it to me then, Susie," he said soothingly. "I'll give it house room until you want it again."

"Oh! for goodness sake, take it, will you, really? It's so cold, and haughty, and scornful."

The Paternal Friend thought he understood. "I will send for it to-morrow," he said. "And, remember, when you wish for it, it is yours."

"Where is your portrait, Castilia?" said James Henry the next day.

"I didn't like it here," replied Castilia, "I took it down."

The artist grew a little pale and said nothing.

Now, since his marriage with Castilia, he had become very chummy with the Paternal Friend, so a day or two after this conversation he called at the house where the Paternal Friend lived in solitary state. He was admitted on the supposition that the master of the house was at home, which turned out to be a mistake.

While waiting, James Henry looked idly about him. Suddenly he staggered back against the wall, for there, hanging in the broad light, was his portrait of his lovely, haughty Castilia. Hastily leaving the house, he turned mechanically homeward. As he neared his own dwelling he lifted his moody eyes to see the Paternal Friend walking blithely away from the door. James Henry strode gloomily into the house; in the hallway stood Castilia—a radiant, different Castilia.

"Oh, James!" she cried joyously, "what do you think has happened?"

"Susan Anna," he said, sternly and gravely, "I know what you have done with your portrait."

"Susan Anna!" The end of the world had come. In the days of his greatest indifference he had never called her Susan Anna.

And because she was a woman, and very much in love, she—slightly prevaricated.

"Yes," she said sweetly, "he has just been here to tell me that he is going to be married to that horrid woman with the green eyes; and"—triumphantly—"I sent the picture to him as a wedding present."

James Henry's face cleared, and then clouded anew. He looked bewildered.

"But—but," he stammered, "he came to-day to tell you of his engagement, and you sent the picture to him three days ago."

"I know I did"—despairingly—"I hated it so, and I cried and said that I couldn't stay in the same house with it, and he offered to keep it until I wanted it again."

"You hated your beautiful portrait, the best thing I ever did," said James Henry in astonishment. "Ah, I see! It was because I painted it, and you had ceased to love me or to take any interest in my work."

"No," she cried, "not that; I never ceased—to take an interest in your work. I—I—James Henry, it was you who ceased to love me."

"Castilia!" he exclaimed in amazement, "I never loved anybody in this wide world but you."

"Not even the Paternal Friend's *fiancée?*"

"What nonsense! My lovely, darling Castilia, she is excellent for purposes of study; her grace and odd colouring are so marked; but you are you—and all is said."

Nancy Blake.

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A Matter of Business.

Which Tells of a Policy that Cut Both Ways.

"Yes, Jack, I do love you."

"You — do — really, Doris?"

"Why, of course I do, you silly boy."

The above conversation took place in the wood which stretches from the outskirts of the village of Amfield away down to Mouswater.

It was the old, sweet, inexhaustible story over again; man's love told in halting, passionate utterances; woman's reply, shy and trembling.

In this case Jack Guthrie could hardly believe the evidence of his ears. Not that he doubted Doris Thornton, but he did not seem to be able to bring himself to understand that this beautiful girl could actually yield herself into his keeping for ever.

Doris Thornton was the only daughter of James Thornton, Esq., a wealthy brewer, who was also the proprietor and editor of the *Domsey Times*.

Jack Guthrie was the owner of Horseley House, a fine old English mansion standing in its own park. It had a home farm, good and plenteous shooting, wild deer, and, in fact, all the attributes which go to make up an English country gentleman's home.

Jack's father, the late William Guthrie, J.P., M.F.H., had died some years before. Mrs. Guthrie and Jack had lived on at Horseley House although they often spoke of buying a smaller place. At least Mrs. Guthrie did, and Jack would doubtless have agreed if Doris Thornton had not come home from the Continent.

She had gone away an angular, bony, plain, awkward girl, and had returned to England at the age of twenty, a most graceful and beauteous maiden.

Why, it was the custom in Amfield and Horseley to say, in praise of anything beautiful, that it was "as pretty as Miss Doris."

Now she had hardly been back four months, and she was already engaged to be married.

It may sound rather calculating to say it, but Doris could hardly have done better. Jack Guthrie was a good-looking, well-educated man of about twenty-six years of age. He was exceedingly well off in regard to monetary matters, and a better fellow or finer athlete was not to be found if you searched the countryside for miles around.

Was it not on record how he had caught hold of Bill Boffin, who was more drunk than usual in the King's Head at Horseley, and carried him struggling for almost half a mile into the park; there he dipped him in Catbasket Pond, which effectually sobered him, and took him home to Mrs. Boffin, into whose hand he put a sovereign.

And there were many similar tales to be heard, for the young master was a great favourite in Horseley.

So now he stood with the trembling form of Doris Thornton clinging to him; his face bent down and pressed against hers; his arms holding her to him as though he would never release her.

She loved him; he could hardly credit it. But it was true—true as God's air and sunshine that he breathed and stood in.

They had met near the Keeper's Cottage at half-past two, and now it was just on six o'clock. Guthrie glanced at his watch, and uttered a sharp exclamation of surprise.

"I must hurry back home, Jack. Father will wonder wherever I have disappeared to," said Doris, when he acquainted her of the hour.

"H'm!" he replied. "That opens up some fresh possibilities. Do you think Mr. Thornton will be pleased when he hears of our engagement?"

"Whyever not, Jack?" Doris cried, in tones of astonishment.

"Well, you remember, he and the guv'nor never used to hit it off very well, did they?"

"Oh, no," cried Doris in anxious tones. "But surely he would not let that interfere between us."

"I hope not, Doris, with all my heart. I suppose I must come over and see him soon. When shall I come?"

"He is going to London on Wednesday, Jack. You had better come to-morrow."

"To-morrow then it is," he replied with an anxious and enormous sigh, which provoked a rippling laugh from Doris.

In half-an-hour's time Jack was striding swiftly along the woodland path which comes out just above Mouswater.

Doris was his, he kept repeating to himself. The very birds sang her name, and he caught himself repeating:

"There's a thought of Thee in the soft sweet breeze,
That sighs o'er the golden moor.
There's a song of thee in the green-leafed trees,
And will be for evermore."

He hardly slept that night through excitement, but a swim in Catbasket Pond refreshed him wonderfully, and he whistled merrily as he passed through the Amfield Woods to beard Mr. Thornton.

"Mr. Thornton will be down in a moment, sir," announced the footman who showed Jack Guthrie into a large morning-room, that opened out into the grounds of Amfield House.

Jack seated himself, and proceeded to survey his surroundings and the position. His reverie was broken by the sudden entrance of Doris. She stood for a moment in the flood of sunlight at the door, and then, with a cry of pleasure, she darted forward and in a moment was in her lover's arms.

It was exceedingly unfortunate that Mr. Thornton happened to choose that exact moment to enter the room. And it was still more to be deplored that his game-keepers had reported that morning that there had been a big raid by some poachers during the night.

"Wh—wh—what the d—d—dickens does this mean?" he spluttered.

"Er——" remarked Jack.

"Oh!" cried Doris, and then she retreated hurriedly, basely deserting her lover.

"Good-morning, Mr. Thornton," began Jack. "I am pleased to see you."

"That's not the truth, sir. You were not pleased to see me," was the ungracious rejoinder.

"No," replied Jack meditatively. "I suppose I was not."

"Well," grunted Mr. Thornton, "now you are certainly candid.

"First of all, though," he went on, "I should be glad to

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know what the pretty scene that I was unfortunate enough to interrupt meant. Confound it, sir!" he was getting angry now. "What do you mean by kissing my daughter?"

"That's what I came to see you about, Mr. Thornton."

"Oh, you did, did you—came to see me about kissing my daughter, eh? A peculiar mission indeed."

"Well, not exactly that, but——"

"Do you know what you do want?" peevishly broke in the old gentleman. "At least I can tell you one thing you do want and that is a business education. You come here to see me about something, and you hum, and haw, and what not, instead of coming to the point."

"I love Doris," burst out Jack, goaded to desperation by Mr. Thornton's haggling.

"Oh; now we have something to work on. Is she equally silly?"

"I don't understand you, Mr. Thornton."

"No, I suppose not. You are one of those young men who have been brought up in the lap of luxury and have never known what it is to want. You have never had to depend on your business ability or your own cleverness, have you now?"

"No," replied Jack glumly.

"I suppose you want to marry Doris?"

"Yes," replied Jack blithely.

"Well, the question I put to you just now was, does she want to marry you?"

"Why, you do not suppose——"

"I do not want any suppositions," broke in Mr. Thornton, "but a plain answer. Yes or no."

"Yes," snapped out Jack.

"Well, that's decided, at any rate. Now then, what qualifications have you as a suitor for my daughter's hand?"

"Eh?" responded Jack blankly.

"Goodness, gracious! You are as dull as the Opposition. Why should I agree to your marriage with Doris?"

"We love each other," replied Jack shortly, for he was beginning to lose his temper. "I shall make her mistress of Horseley."

"Very nice, very nice. But I do not wish my daughter to marry a man for whom I have no respect."

"What in the world do you mean, sir?" roared out Jack, as he towered over Mr. Thornton.

"Now, please don't get excited, a good business man always keeps his head."

"Good business man be hanged," retorted Jack. "I want to know what you meant by saying you did not respect me?"

"Well, what have you done that I should? You are not responsible for your position and wealth. You have done nothing but shoot, ride, drive, and all the rest of it. Why should I respect you?"

There was no reply. It was a knotty point and required consideration.

"Now, look here, my boy," said Mr. Thornton, in a kindlier tone than he had yet adopted. "When you can come to me and show me that you have got a good business head on your shoulders you shall have Doris. Do something clever in the business world, something to show that you have brains, but until you have succeeded I refuse to agree to your marriage with Doris."

It was a knockdown blow for Jack, but the fighting blood of his race surged through his veins; he set his jaw, and momentarily clenched his fists. Mr. Thornton noted these unconscious actions, and inwardly approved them.

"That is your ultimatum, sir?" said Jack at length.

"It is, my boy."

"Well, then, I'll agree. But you'll let me see Doris once more?"

"You shall have her to yourself for half-an-hour," replied Mr. Thornton. "And then you must endeavour not to see her until you have fulfilled the conditions of our compact.

"It will be better in another way, too," he added. "For it will test whether your love for each other is strong enough to endure separation. Now I'll send Doris in to you."

Jack impatiently paced up and down the room after Mr. Thornton's departure. His brow was knit, and his lips tightly compressed. Hearing the door open, he swung round. Doris came towards him with a troubled, apprehensive look on her face.

"Well, Jack?" she said, as she crept into the shelter of his arms.

"Well, little woman. We must make the most of this half hour for it is the last we shall have together for some considerable time."

"Jack!" she cried. "The last! What do you mean?"

Then he told her of her father's decree, and that he had had to agree to it.

"But I will not keep you long, dear," he added. "I'll do something to make him come round very quickly."

The remainder of the interview need not be chronicled, but after Jack had gone Doris was some considerable time putting her hair straight. Having done that, she sat down and sobbed, and made her hair all untidy again.

As for Jack, he strode on down the main road, looking neither to the right nor the left. Through Amfield he tramped, down the road past Mouswater and on to Horseley, but he did not come back to ordinary everyday thoughts until he found himself past the village of Abis, and only a little way from Dunchester.

Two days passed by, and many plans had evolved in his brain, but they were all dismissed for some reason or other.

Suddenly his eyes gleamed, and he jumped to his feet excitedly.

"Got it!" he screamed. "By the Lord Harry, I've got it."

And the next day he departed to London.

* * * * *

Domsey (pronounced Dumsey) is a quaint old town built round a very ancient monastery. It is tenderly referred to by its inhabitants as "Domsey in the Mud."

Sleepy is the most characteristic adjective to apply to Domsey, except on every other Thursday when a market is held. There is one every Thursday, but the fortnightly market is much the larger of the two.

Like the town, Mr. Thornton's journal, the *Domsey Times*, was a peaceful, ambling sort of newspaper. They used to say that subscribers who were accustomed to an afternoon nap, very often failed to sleep if they had not got a copy of the *Domsey Times* in their hands.

It had a delightful little way of its own of appearing on different days of the week, according to how much time the Editor could spare to it.

However, Domsey woke up one morning to find all its walls placarded with staring posters. They were printed with a green ground and white letters with a scarlet edging. Altogether they produced a most startling effect. The text of the contents was as follows:

TO THE INHABITANTS OF DOMSEY!
You will shortly be the proud possessors of a first-class
NEWSPAPER
which will not send you to sleep.
READ THE *DOMSEY TELEGRAPH.*
Price 1d. Published every Thursday.
A LONDON NEWSPAPER IN DOMSEY!!!

It is really only in a country town or village that people talk to each other about everything, and that the popular opinion is generally quickly known.

Domsey viewed this innovation with marked interest. It was a splendid idea of the promoters to publish the paper on market days.

The *Domsey Times* had always been on sale at the various stationers, and there the subscribers had to go to obtain a copy. But on the Thursday when the first edition of the *Domsey Telegraph* came out, a number of boys paraded the town with copies of that paper for sale.

Most people bought both of the papers, and made nasty comparisons to the detriment of the *Times*.

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"Well, Oi be danged!" remarked a burly, red-faced countryman. "This be a foine paper, I'll taak it hoam to the missus."

This expressed the general opinion of the Domseyites, more particularly when they read that copies would be delivered free of charge to all subscribers within a three mile radius of Domsey.

A large office and printing works had been taken over by the promoters in Church Street, which was surveyed with wondering admiration by all the townsfolk.

At Amfield House, Mr. Thornton read the *Domsey Telegraph* with vague, angry feelings of uneasiness.

"Won't last, my dear," he assured Doris. "You will see that my words will come true. The *Times* has been established too long, and has too firm a foothold to be thrust out by a flashy paper like this. I tell you, my dear, the *Telegraph* will expire in a fortnight."

Doris did not care much about the rivalry between the papers, all she wanted was Jack. She had not heard a word about him since he went to London, and she yearned to see him again.

However, a month went by, and the two vivid red motor-cars still made their rounds to the subscribers to the *Telegraph*. The new paper appeared with marked regularity, and was always far better informed than the *Domsey Times*.

The latter paper never made the slightest mention of its rival, but where you saw one copy of the *Domsey Times* you would see four copies of the *Domsey Telegraph*.

The climax came when the *Telegraph* commenced a series of prize competitions which highly took the fancy of Domseyites.

The circulation increased by leaps and bounds, and people living in Dunchester and Sarbury, both large country towns about eleven miles distant from Domsey, began to take in the *Telegraph*.

Mr. Thornton commenced to look worried. The *Domsey Times* had always been a lucrative investment but now he was beginning to lose money over it.

True it was that he could well afford it, but the idea went against the grain, and at last he came to the conclusion that he must adopt some means of altering the state of affairs.

It was a sore blow to his pride after having held the field for twelve years to have to give in to a newcomer after two months.

Sadly, therefore, he sat down and indited the following letter:

Amfield House, near Domsey.

To the Proprietor of the Domsey Telegraph, *Domsey.*

SIR—*It must be apparent to you that there is no opening for two local papers in Domsey, and in consideration of that fact I beg to make the following proposal:*

That the Domsey Telegraph *and the* Domsey Times *be amalgamated and incorporated under one Proprietor and Editor, but that the original proprietors of the two papers receive a division of profits, such division to be arrived at by placing the accounts of the two journals in the hands of a trustworthy valuer, etc., etc., etc.*

In two or three days' time a reply came back from a London firm of solicitors who were empowered to act for the proprietor of the *Domsey Telegraph*. The letter was to the effect that their client would not consider for one moment the question of amalgamation, but he would be willing to be bought out.

Mr. Thornton was now at a critical point. Either he must give in, and cease to issue the *Domsey Times*, or else he must agree to the said proposal.

Already people were quietly laughing at him, and he knew that the death of the *Domsey Times* would mean a great loss of prestige. So he took the bull by the horns and commenced negotiations for the purchase of the *Domsey Telegraph*.

The price asked was a high one—£500 more than he had anticipated paying. After some haggling he managed to reduce it by £150, but had to close at that figure.

So the *Domsey Times*, now somewhat glorified, remained the only local newspaper in that remarkable and somnambulistic town.

All this time Doris was worrying the roses from her cheeks through the absence of Jack. Never a word or a message had come from him, all she knew was that he had gone to London.

Mr. Thornton had been too much occupied by reason of his newspaper controversy to pay much attention to his daughter's looks, but now he had time to himself he was astonished to find how ill she was looking.

"Here," he said, when he had elicited the cause of her pale looks from her. "We'll have that young man back at once. I'll write him to-day."

But at that very moment a footman brought in the visiting-card of Mr. John Guthrie.

Doris hastily slipped upstairs.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Thornton, "what can I do for you?"

"Fulfil your part of our contract," was Jack's reply. "I have done my part."

"Indeed, and what have you done?"

"That!" cried Jack, as he handed Mr. Thornton the cheque with which he had paid for the *Telegraph*.

Mr. Thornton looked at it, and then his face went scarlet with suppressed rage.

"What!" he shrieked. "You did that?"

"Yes, sir. Good business, was it not?"

"Good business!" Mr. Thornton almost screamed. "You young——" He paused and considered for a moment. Then the angry look died away, and an amused twinkle appeared in his eyes.

"Well, after all," he said. "You've only done what I told you to do. Here, take this back."

He held out the cheque.

Jack took it, and deliberately tore it into several pieces.

"Now, sir, we're quits. I've had my turn and paid for it."

"No," cried Mr. Thornton. "You must not do that."

In vain he protested, Jack was obdurate.

"Well, my boy. You've been a bit smarter than your future father-in-law. Here's my hand on it. Now I will send Doris in to you."

Presently she came in, and Jack has said that the bliss of that reunion was worth the pain of the parting and absence.

With the aid of some of his journalistic friends and the outlay of some capital, Jack had found it very easy to produce the *Domsey Telegraph* and to make it a far better paper than the *Domsey Times*.

"Where there's a will there's a way"—even in Domsey—and generally everywhere when there's money to back the will.

E. Newton Bungey.

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The Story of a Plot that Failed.

THE first time I met Mrs. Penthony she was—very naturally and properly, as it was only two months after Terry's death—clad in deepest widow's weeds. "My poor, dear husband," was written large all over her, from the orthodox crape bonnet on her head, to the dainty black-stockinged ankles revealed as she stepped out of the carriage.

We had not been aware of the existence of Terry's wife until she announced herself in a heart-broken letter to my father as Terry's widow, and then my mother insisted on inviting her at once to Penthony Court.

We had all adored Terry—my father, mother, and myself. In earliest years I had trotted after him, his devoted little slave, and, when asked my name, had always responded, "Terry's sister," instead of the proper reply, "Diana Penthony."

Terry, however, had not turned out quite as he ought to have done, and after a somewhat lurid career, he was sent abroad with a tutor, to rusticate in a quiet German village, from which he sent my mother repentant and affectionate letters. It was a terrible shock to us all when we had a wire from Mr. Green, the tutor, announcing our poor, dear boy's sudden death, followed by a letter telling us that the authorities had insisted on the interment taking place within the next two days.

My father was prostrate with grief, and his next heir and nearest male relative, my cousin, Dare Penthony, was in India, so poor Terence was buried far away from us all without one of his kith and kin to follow him to the grave.

Six weeks later, Mrs. Terence Penthony's letter amazed us all. Of course Terry, being twenty-four, might quite easily have got married without seeking his parent's consent, but there seemed no motive for secrecy.

Katherine Penthony was, she told us, the daughter of an independent gentlemen, who had settled in the remote German village for his health's sake, and she certainly wrote us in the style and handwriting of a gentlewoman.

"Poor, dear boy," sighed my mother, "it seems strange he did not tell us of it."

"It seems her father died very suddenly," said my father, glancing over the letter again, "and Terry asked her to marry him at once because she was alone, and then the poor boy's death followed before he could announce the marriage to us."

"Poor child, it is very sad for her," murmured my mother.

"She doesn't seem to know that Terry came into ten thousand pounds on his marriage," my father went on.

"Did he really?" asked Dare, who had come back from India, on receiving my father's summons.

"His godfather left him ten thousand pounds, to be paid over to him on his marriage day, not before, and to pass to his widow, if she survived him. It was rather a queer idea, wasn't it?"

"Rather," said Dare. "But you are not going to accept this woman's unsupported statement that she is Terry's widow, are you?"

My mother fired up at the idea of doubting the poor girl's word, and my father picked up another letter with the same post-mark, and opened it.

"As it happens, my dear Dare," he said quietly, "we are not required to accept Katherine's unsupported testimony. This letter is from Green—Terry's tutor, you know, giving a fuller and more detailed account of the marriage than the poor, broken-hearted child has been able to do. It seems that they fell in love with each other at first sight, but that the father's sudden death precipitated matters. Terry's own death occurred but two days after his marriage, before he had time to write to us. Read for yourself." He handed the letter to Dare, who glanced over it, and then passed it on to my mother.

An invitation was sent to my sister-in-law by return of post, with the result that, within three weeks, she arrived in the deepest possible mourning, and with a face expressive of the acutest grief.

But she was very beautiful. I had been in the habit of considering myself rather a pretty little person, but I faded into insignificance beside Katherine. What was my round, rosy face compared with that faultless oval of hers? How commonplace were my grey eyes beside her large, velvety black orbs. My nut-brown curls seemed unworthy of admiration, seen near the heavy, rich black locks that crowned her small, graceful head. And how short and stumpy I looked beside her tall, slim, exquisitely graceful figure.

She took us all by storm. Her manner was perfect, sweet, gentle, mournful, pathetic. My father and mother adored her, and wished her to make her home entirely with us, but, to my secret joy, she refused. She would spend every summer with us, she promised, but there was an old uncle in Krahwinkel—the German town where she had met Terry—with whom she wished to make her home while he lived. It might not be long, for he was over eighty, but, while he lived, her duty, she thought, was to him.

So it was agreed that she should remain with us until arrangements could be made for paying over to her the ten thousand pounds, due to her as Terry's widow, and then she should be free to return to Krahwinkel until next summer, when she would come again to Penthony Court.

I secretly hoped affairs would be arranged very soon, so that she might go, for, however much I might have liked her had she not been such a general favourite, it was really more than an ordinary, flesh-and-blood girl could stand to see her winning the affections of both father and mother, and, far worse, of the young man on whom I had set my own heart, and whom I had fondly imagined to be my own lover.

He had certainly been very tender to me in my first grief at my brother's death, and we had got upon very affectionate terms before the arrival of the disconsolate widow. Was she so very disconsolate though? Were my jealous eyes mistaken when I saw glances cast at Dare—glances which no disconsolate widow ought to throw to another man, much less a man who was rightfully another woman's property.

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Quite three months had passed before the lawyers had everything in order, and were ready to hand over the ten thousand pounds to Terry's widow. The money was, by her request, to be paid into the hands of a banker in London, there to await a suitable investment.

It was a lovely evening in mid-September, a glorious harvest moon shone down on the flower-beds on the lawn at Penthony Court, lighting them up with its pale but distant beams, and leaving the terrace and house in the shadow.

I had been at the piano ever since dinner, playing favourite bits of music to my parents, but my attention was chiefly occupied in wondering with all my jealous, wounded heart, what had become of Dare and Katherine. An hour ago, they had gone out of the low French window on to the terrace to look at the moon, and apparently they were still looking at it.

I stole a glance at the other occupants of the room. My father had dropped asleep over his newspaper, my mother was absorbed in a difficulty she had encountered in her lace-work. They would not notice, if I slipped out after the missing couple. Go I must; my heart was on fire with jealousy, anger, and pain.

Two figures, both dark, were at the end of the terrace, where the steps led down to the lawn, and the moon was shining full on them. They were leaning against the balustrade, so absorbed in each other's society that they did not notice my approach. I did not mean to become an eavesdropper, but there was a big lump in my throat as I saw their loving attitude, which quite prevented speech, and before I could swallow it down and call attention to my presence, Dare had bent forward and kissed the glowing cheek so near his own, and I stood frozen to the spot. My worst fears were realised; the man I loved was the lover of my brother's widow.

"Kate, darling," he was saying, when, to a certain degree, I came to myself, "you do love me, don't you? It's too early to talk of a second marriage as yet, I know, but give me a word of hope."

"Don't be ridiculous," Kate's sweet voice replied. "You know you love Diana."

"I thought I did," Dare answered slowly. "Yes, Kate, you are right; I thought I loved little Di; she is a sweet, dear little girl, but you—Kate, you are a goddess. My beautiful, my glorious love, kiss me."

With a faint cry I drew back, and fled in the other direction, down into the park. How could I bear it? My grief for my brother's death had been hard to bear, but what had that been compared with the pain that his widow had brought upon me? As I ran sobbing through the park I suddenly heard a man's step approaching me, and before I could stop myself I ran headlong into the arms of someone coming from the West Lodge.

"Di, my little Di," said a familiar voice in my ears, and dear, well-known lips pressed mine. "Well, little sister, is it you?"

"Terry, Terry, *Terry*," I cried. "Oh, how can it be you? You are dead."

"Dead!"

He released me in his surprise, and faced me in amazed silence. The moon showered its beams full on his astonished face, and showed it to me as clearly as if it had been daylight. It certainly was my brother Terence; my brother whom we all believed to be buried in a little German village, and whose widow was now on the terrace with the man I loved.

"Dead!" he repeated, almost in a whisper. "Diana, what do you mean?"

"Well, anyhow, your widow is here," I said confusedly.

"My widow!" he echoed. "Dear little Diana, what is the matter with you? My widow? How *can* I have a widow? I never was married—nor am I dead, as you can see."

"Well, she *says* she's your widow," I said, doubtfully, "and she *says* you're dead. And Mr. Green says you're dead."

"Ah, that I understand," replied Terry, with a peculiar look. "Does mother think I'm dead?"

"Why, of course, Terry," I cried; "you mustn't go to her now—the shock might kill her. I'll prepare her. But—who's Kate?"

"Kate? A great, strapping creature, is she? With black hair and eyes? Handsome, but coarse?"

"Yes, that's Kate," I replied, greatly consoled by this description of her triumphant charms. How I wished that Dare could have heard it."

"That's Green's sister. I'll tell you all about it, Di, and then you must break the news of my return to my father and mother, and I'll make a clean breast of it to them. Come and sit down here. I know very well why she's posing as my widow here. We weren't long in Krahwinkel—why did my father send me to such a dull hole?—before I found out that Green wasn't a bit what he pretended to be, and he found the place as unendurable as I did, so we soon set off together for Monte Carlo, where I lost heavily. Kate, Green's sister, was at the tables, too, and Green, who knew that by my godfather's will I came in for that money on my marriage, tried his best to bring about a match between us. But I was not having any. She's just the kind of girl I can't stand at any price. Well, I had lost so much money that I had got into a regular fix, and I worried myself into a brain fever over it. When I came to myself, I was in a miserable little hut, where I had no idea, with a dirty old woman gabbling Italian to me. After a bit, Green turned up, and told me that he was going to keep me prisoner there until I promised to marry his sister. One way or another he did manage to keep me there—I was very weak with the fever, remember—until three days ago, when he also took ill with some kind of fever, and I managed to escape, while the old woman was attending to him. Now, dear, run off to the house, I can't wait any longer. Break the news to my father and mother, but don't give Kate Green any warning, if you can avoid it."

How I managed to tell them the glad news, I don't know, but I did somehow, and in a very short time Terry was in his mother's arms, back from the dead!

The routing of Terry's widow followed shortly afterwards, and was undertaken by Terry himself.

I was not present at the scene, and only know that she was permitted to remain at Penthony Court that night, and that no proceedings were to be taken against either her or her brother. She went off by an early train next morning, and we never heard any more of either brother or sister.

As for Dare, he was first stunned and then remorseful for his treatment of me, but I am of a very forgiving disposition, and I soon pardoned his brief infatuation.

In fact, I may as well confess that when he asked me to prove my forgiveness by becoming his wife, I only required a judicious amount of pressing before I faltered out a shy but very willing "Yes."

It was very lucky that Terry returned at the moment he did, lucky for himself, myself, and—Dare!

Vera Serkoff.

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POWERFUL NEW ROMANCE. STARTS TO-DAY.

A CRIMINAL MILLIONAIRE

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "Olga Romanoff," "The Lake of Gold," etc., etc.

FIRST CHAPTER.

Lady Medcalf-Mears' "At Home."

"I say, Maud, you know everybody in town. Tell me who that chap is?"

"Which 'chap,' my dear Captain Iddison?" replied Lady Maud.

"Oh, look here, Maud, you needn't be so awfully formal with a fellow, you know. Hang it all, we're——"

"Yes, of course, my dear Percy," interrupted Lady Maud Hyam, the latest, and, as some said, the most beautiful of the season's *fiancées*, "but I was only following your own example, and, after all, formality has its uses even between engaged people."

"All right," replied Captain Iddison. "You know I don't pretend to be much good at formality."

"No, my dear boy, I know you aren't, and I am very glad of it," replied Lady Maud, dropping her fan lightly on the broad shoulder of the young Hercules who was sitting by her side in Lady Medcalf-Mears' big drawing-room in Lowndes Square. "You are a good deal better at fighting, and that's why—well, I suppose that's why I like you. At any rate, it's one of the reasons. And now which fellow is it that you mean?"

"Why, that one, of course," he replied, so far forgetting his good manners as to half point with his finger at what was certainly the most distinguished male figure in the big, crowded drawing-room.

"Oh, yes!" she said, with a little note of awe in her voice. "That? Why, Percy, do you mean to say that although you returned only a fortnight ago from the ends of the earth, you haven't yet made the acquaintance of the lion of the season? Don't you know that Lady Medcalf-Mears always has the newest and biggest lion in the whole social menagerie at her 'At homes,' especially just when the season's beginning? That is Mr. Isolo Staunton, the modern Monte Christo, as they call him.

"He is one of the biggest scores that even our experienced hostess has ever made. He is a man—you have only got to look at him to see that—six feet one in his boots if he's an inch, and built to scale; a millionaire no one knows how many times over—and something else which raises him far above the ordinary rut of men and millionaires—a mystery."

"What's that?" murmured the Honourable Percy, leaning if possible a little closer to her and looking into the beautiful face which was so temptingly near his own. "A mystery—what do you mean by that? I should hardly have thought that a man with a past that no one knows anything at all about, if that's what you mean, would have been taken up by Lady Mary, however big a pot he might be in other ways."

"My dear boy," she laughed, "you ought to know that a man with an unknown past, if he has done something, or made himself something, is one of the most successful social exhibits that the modern hostess can put on show!"

"Is that all you have to tell me about the new lion? You see I have only been back a fortnight, and I have spent about eight days of it up at Harrowby, which is nearly a day's journey each way. Can't you tell me anything more about him? I don't know why I should take such an interest in the subject, but somehow I do."

"Yes," said Lady Maud with a little toss of her golden-crowned head, "if he were a woman and as good-looking as he is as a man, I should almost be inclined to be jealous, but really I can't tell you anything more than I have done, except what everybody can tell you at the clubs.

"He is, as I have told you, a multi-millionaire. No one knows who he is, what he is, or where he came from. Of course, without his millions, I suppose no one would ever have heard of him, but with the millions to gild what everyone admits to be a very interesting personality—well, here he is, Isolo Staunton.

"But stop, here comes Mr. Ellerton. You know him, of course—the only son of Sir Wilfrid Ellerton. I think Sir Wilfrid is one of the men we really ought to be proud of. He began life, they say, as a fitter, or whatever they call it, in a machine shop at Ellerton, in Yorkshire. You know such a lot of people in the North are named after the places they live in, or else the places are named after some far-away ancestor who made the place, and so they must be a sort of aristocracy of their own kind with scores of generations behind them. But you can see for yourself," she continued in a lower tone as she rose and held out her hand.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Ellerton, I hope you haven't been here very long, or I should feel inclined to be offended with you for not having come to speak to me before. You don't know Mr. Iddison—I beg his pardon, *Captain* Iddison? He is only just back from Somaliland, so you may as well be introduced now."

The Honourable Percy Iddison, captain of His Majesty's Engineers, V.C., D.S.O., and special service officer in South Africa, shook hands warmly with Ellerton.

The handshake didn't mean much, but the look that was in their eyes convinced both of them in the same moment that each had met a man, and each instinctively liked the other.

What Percy Iddison saw, when he shook hands with the son of the man who had taken the world by the throat for the sake of his son, was just this:

A straight, upstanding, square-jawed, broad-browed, curly, chestnut-haired young fellow of about twenty-four, a year less than his own age, with dark eyebrows over-arching grey-blue Celtic eyes. A sort of man that he would like to have

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with him in a tight corner, or meet face to face in what he would have called a really good scrape.

"I see that you know each other already," said Lady Maud, with a little laugh rippling through her words. "I suppose it is a case of when man meets man—now, isn't that quite the prettiest compliment that woman could have paid both of you?"

"Really, Lady Maud, I am afraid you are quite too flattering, at least to one of us," said Ellerton, with a glance which the other man would have resented if he hadn't felt that he was quite safe, "still——"

"Thanks, but don't say any more just now, because—well, I think other things are going to happen. Now, Percy, you are going to have a new sensation. Excuse me, just one moment, Mr. Ellerton, here is Lady Mary bringing the lion of the evening to be introduced."

As she said this Wilfrid Ellerton turned his head towards Lady Mary Medcalf-Mears and the Lion. As he did so, Iddison noticed that there was a streak of almost white hair running from the front of the left ear down almost to the base of the skull, which showed up like a streak of white mist against a bank of blue-grey thundercloud. His hair was dark chesnut, almost black in certain lights, and almost golden in others.

"Rather curious, that. Still, I've seen that sort of thing happen in a month or so in the field, but not go in a streak like that. Wonder what's been the matter with him. Not an Army man, so he can't have got it in that way!"

These were the thoughts which ran through Percy Iddison's brain as he shook hands with Wilfrid Ellerton and then turned to greet his hostess, Lady Mary Medcalf-Mears, who had brought her latest lion to be introduced to her most interesting, although, perhaps, not her most distinguished guests.

"I don't think you all know each other yet," said Lady Mary. "Mr. Isolo Staunton, Lady Maud Hyam, Captain Percy Iddison, Mr. Wilfrid Ellerton, and *vice versâ*. Well, now, you know yourselves as far as the conventionalities go, and the rest, I think, I can safely leave in your own hands. You see, I am rather busy this afternoon, and so I know that you will excuse me."

With that she vanished into the throng of the other guests with grace that no other woman in London had been able to copy.

The preliminaries of polite conversation-making were hardly over when a famous Hungarian violinist, accompanied by an almost equally famous German pianist, began to play. This, of course, put an end to all talk save among those who, in spite of their breeding, were yet sufficiently ill-mannered to think that the music—which was costing their hostess something like five guineas a minute—was only intended to mask the muttered commonplaces with which they were wasting time until it was possible to make a decent leave-taking.

"Shall we go and listen?" said Lady Maud, rising with a look, that was practically a command, at Iddison. "I love the violin."

The others who were seated rose also, and they drifted along with the tide, which was flowing with a gentle frou-frou of silken underskirts, into the music-room overlooking the pretty, old-fashioned garden.

SECOND CHAPTER.

A Spectre from the Past.

But there was one man in that company for whom just now the sweetest strains that genius could win from the most perfect instruments were only utter discords, tormenting almost to madness.

Percy Iddison was not the only man who had noticed that curious white streak among Wilfrid Ellerton's chestnut curls. Isolo Staunton had seen it to, and he had all too little reason to wonder how it came there. As soon as the music was over he made his adieux and went out into the street, staring about him with wavering eyes like a man newly awakened in a strange world. When his brougham came up to the door he dismissed his man, saying that he preferred to walk home, and telling him he was not required.

Isolo Staunton was a man of action, as well as of thought, and when he was thinking really

"Good afternoon, Mr. Ellerton," said Lady Maud, "let me introduce you to Captain Iddison."

hard it was also absolutely necessary for him to have his muscles as well as his nerves at work, and so he walked.

His brain had never been working with such fierce intensity as it was working now as he made his way along the crowded pavements of Sloane Street and Knightsbridge. Much of his life had been passed in the wilderness, and now he felt a desperate longing for the solitude of the wilderness again, and the solace which that solitude brings.

He turned up into the Park past Apsley House, and walked across to the Marble Arch. So far there was only one thought in his brain, only one thing that his eyes really saw—that thin streak of white hair running through the closely-cropped chestnut curls of Wilfrid Ellerton. It was something like a brief but ever-recurring nightmare to him.

At the corner of Edgware Road he took an omnibus to Cricklewood.

He got out into the open country as soon as he could. He knew it had to come, and with that primeval instinct which possesses every human being, he wanted to get away from his fellow men and fight his trouble out in solitude.

For an hour he walked on, a strange figure, clad, as he was in his light grey frock suit and a glossy hat, which was now tilted back at an angle which would have made men in Pall Mall look round at him, his hands behind his back, his head bent forward, seeing nothing but the road over which he was walking.

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Then out of the dust which rose on the wind blowing behind him, certain shapes began to form themselves. The fields and the hedges vanished. In their place came a wide, blue-grey expanse of water.

The sky-dome above was blue-grey also. Its colour had been burnt out of it by the fierce rays of the sun that was blazing overhead. What was left of paint on the whale boat was crinkling up into blisters. There was a man lying forward, just as he had dropped off the seat. He was the second who had died that day. The other had seen visions of islands, green with verdure, fed by clear springs, and he had drunk the seawater and had presently dropped himself overboard, raving mad, to drink more of it, and so find the common death of the castaway.

He was steering, and beside him was an axe, the symbol of the power which he had taken into his own hands when the boat was cast adrift from the sinking ship which had been hurled hundreds of miles before one of those gales which come up from the Antarctic.

On the mid-thwart there was a man sitting. His arms were on the gunwale and his head lay loosely between them, moving with every motion of the boat. He was half dead already and it would not take very much to finish the business with him. Forward on the next thwart there was a boy of about fourteen, dying, but still strong with the miraculous vitality of youth. There was enough of biscuits and tinned meat and water to last one man for another fortnight or so, but not enough for three. He was half mad with the insanity of thirst aggravated by the horrible temptation to drink by the pint the precious water which his discipline had so far limited to a few spoonfuls. He saw himself let go of the tiller and rise wearily from his seat. He heard himself say:

"It's no good, Willy. Jack's gone and old Tom is about finished. You and I had better make an end of him and finish the cruise somehow between us. We have not stuff enough for three. There might be for two."

Then the boy jumped up and came at him with a sudden flush in his white cheeks, and a sudden energy in his whole body.

"No," he muttered hoarsely, the words coming thickly and slowly from between his parched lips. "No, I see what you mean, but you sha'n't. It is murder. It doesn't matter whether he is half dead or not. It is murder all the same. You —You shan't do it. It's murder, I tell you!"

He picked up the axe as the boy jumped at him. He tripped over the half dead body of the man on the middle thwart, and as he went down the axe fell. He saw a streak of red among the chestnut curls and then the sky and ocean seemed to come together.

He stumbled forward, lifted the axe again and struck the prostrate man. As he lifted it once more his own brain seemed to snap with a bang—and there the scene ended.

The curtain of forgetfulness dropped swiftly upon the stage of memory. The scene vanished—and here he was again walking between the green English hedges with the broad fields on either side of him sloping upwards to the softly rounded tree-growing hills.

Isolo Zuarez, castaway and convict, was dead once more. Isolo Staunton took off his hat, wiped his forehead, put his hat on again, thrust his hands into his pockets, and walked back to the Cricklewood Arms, saying to himself between his tightly clenched teeth:

"If he remembers well, I suppose it will mean I return to the Chinchas, again a convict. If he doesn't, so much the better. If I'd finished the job before I fainted no one could have traced me. Tom was dead and Willy was insensible, and I was mad when they picked us up. The axe had dropped overboard, and when the young beggar came to he remembered nothing.

"If he only has forgotten, then in just a few years more the world shall see another Napoleon—the uniter of a thousand warring interests, the director into a single channel of the energy which is now spent in conflicts which are as trifling as the quarrels of children in the gutter, the Creator of a new Power in the world, a Power which, directed as I will direct it, shall break the yoke which these Anglo-Saxons have put upon the necks of the nations, and make Spain once more what she was in the days of Cortez and Pizarro, Queen of the Seas and Mistress of East and West!"

THIRD CHAPTER.

Looking Backwards.

The key-note of Isolo Staunton's later existence had been independence. It did not matter to him whether the person with whom he had to deal for the moment was a man or a woman. He was wont to pride himself on the consciousness that in matters of business—he recognised no distinction of sex, and this, as many of his unsuccessful rivals were forced to admit, was a very great advantage to him. He could swindle a pretty duchess or get a Cabinet Minister into financial troubles which would be profitable to himself with just as light a heart as he would get the better of a German Jew financier.

He cared for nothing but money, and for what money could buy for him.

Although he possessed the genius of making money he also had the cleverness to see that it is not exactly money which makes one a power in the world, but rather the use that money is put to, and so he used the superfluity of his wealth wisely.

One of his carefully calculated extravagances was his turbine yacht *Isola*. She was a thousand-ton vessel and her engines were the latest development of the turbine principle of propulsion. Her lines were exquisite, she was a veritable aristocrat of the ocean and, although no one outside her officers and crew knew it, she was also the fastest craft in the world.

His little expedition to Cricklewood had really been one of the most strenuous experiences even in a life as full of living as his had been. He was just thirty-eight and he had begun to live at ten. His father had been a Scottish adventurer, called sometimes Staunton and sometimes Saunders, and Zuarez had been the Spanish disguise or semi-translation of the latter which he had adopted when he took the plunge into South American politics which, after a couple of bitterly fought revolutions, had resulted in his becoming first Vice-President and then President of Peru. He had married a very beautiful Spanish girl and Isolo, their only child, was both physically and mentally as good and as bad a compound of Scottish and Spanish American as could well have been produced from such a union. He had his father's inches, a good six feet of bone and muscle, his mother's features, but the shape of his head was Scottish in its squareness, and his hair was a crisp, curly, reddish-brown. The fire of the Spanish American was tempered by the cold, calculating genius of the Scotsman, strangely combined with the dreaminess of the Celt.

The second revolution had ended in utter ruin. His father had refused to believe in the failure of his cause, and so had delayed beyond reasonable limits his preparations for escaping with the Presidential plunder. The result was that he was caught and shot by the victorious revolutionists, and his plunder duly transferred to the pockets of his successor, and those who had helped him to overthrow the tyrant, and in the natural course of events some other tyrant was put in his place.

This had happened when the boy was ten years old, and after it had come five or six years of poverty and exile with his mother in Chili. Then his mother, the only human being he

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had ever loved, died, leaving him her own ideals and the lessons she had taught him as her only legacy, and after this had begun the wild life on the coast, now ashore and now afloat, a desperate gamble of liberty, and perhaps life, for sudden wealth, the living death of the Chincha Islands, the almost miraculous escape, a few years at sea, then the tragedy of the whale boat, and then the marvel which had laid the foundation of his present fortune, the extent of which no one but himself could measure, and of which no one save those in his inmost confidence knew the real sources.

So far for nearly fifteen years these fortunes had grown steadily and swiftly, and as the millions had piled themselves on each other the great ideal which he had inherited from his Spanish mother had come nearer and nearer to its longed-for fulfilment. Political and military agents all over the world had been working for years towards the same end under the orders of an unknown and invisible master. Diplomatists had found their negotiations shaped almost unconsciously by the same mysterious power and, in short, all the vast machinery that he had set in motion was working smoothly and well, when this spectre from the past had suddenly risen above the unclouded horizon and he saw not only the fabric of his life work but even his own liberty, nay, his very life itself, at the mercy of a lad of twenty-three.

The *Isola* was lying alongside Ocean Quay, Southampton, about a week after the reception, with steam up ready for one of those mysterious trips which periodically took her owner far away beyond the ken of the fashionable world of Europe.

Isolo Staunton was lying on a lounge in his exquisitely, though somewhat plainly appointed, private room at the after-end of the long, spacious promenade deck. It was entirely isolated from all the other saloons and state-rooms on the ship. It had double walls of steel and oak and double windows of thick plate glass through which no sound could penetrate, and it was generally understood on board the great yacht that when the Señor was in his sanctum no one was to approach him, or have any communication with him except by telephone from the captain's room under the navigating bridge. It was in fact the most perfect council chamber that any ruler of men crowned or uncrowned could have possessed, an inviolable sanctuary of secrets which the most ingenious curiosity must fail to penetrate.

The Señor was just now in earnest consultation with his principal counseller and only real confidant, a tall, sparely-built man of about fifty-five, whose delicately-cut, aquiline features, dark, piercing, though somewhat closely-set eyes, high, narrow forehead, and still dark, glossy hair only slightly frosted with grey at the temples proclaimed him a Castilian of the purest blood. This was Don Ramiero Valdez y Valdivia. He was the last remaining scion of one of those ancient Castilian families which had settled in Peru soon after the conquest, and had kept its proud blood pure by avoiding all inter-marriage. Like many other such families in South America, wars, revolutions and confiscations had reduced them to almost absolute poverty, but President Zuarez and Don Ramiero's father had been comrades in the revolution which placed him in power, and he had done much to restore the fortunes of the Valdez family. Comradeship in arms had led to complete personal devotion, and Valdez had become the President's one trusted counsellor as Ramiero was now the one confidant of Isolo Staunton.

He knew of the irregularities which had consigned the man whom Society called the modern Monte Christo to the sea-girt prison of the Chincha Islands, but in his eyes they were political offences against a usurping government, and therefore rather in the nature of virtues than of crimes. He knew also of the tragedy of the whaleboat—for Staunton never gave half confidences, knowing well how treacherous they are—and *that* he excused on the double ground of delirium and self-preservation. Under any circumstances the son of his father's friend and the benefactor of his house had a better right to live and do his great work in the world than a couple of common seamen and an insignificant ship's boy.

"Of course the great point is," said Staunton, after they had put in a few moments of hard thinking, "whether young Ellerton remembers me and the painful circumstances of our last meeting or not. If he doesn't, which is the same thing as saying that if that crack which I thought necessary to give him across the head has, as such a crack will do sometimes, cut that little piece out of his memory, I don't see that we need disquiet ourselves in vain about him."

"Pardon, Señor," interrupted Valdez, with grave deference, "but there I would say that you are going wrong at the very beginning. It is exactly in that case that I would counsel you to take the most prompt measures for his very necessary suppression."

"I am afraid I hardly follow you, my dear Ramiero," said Staunton, looking up quickly. "If the fellow remembers nothing, and he certainly didn't seem to have the ghost of a recollection of me the other day at Lady Mary's, what harm can he do? As far as that little incident is concerned it is as good as dead."

"For the present—yes," replied Valdez softly, as he rolled a little brown Peruvian cigarette between his tapering, long-nailed fingers, "but for all that his existence, or if you have scruples about proceeding to extremities, his continued existence in freedom, can nevertheless be nothing but a perpetual menace, not only to that great and glorious work to which you have devoted your life, but even to your life itself. Is he not the one living link which connects the present with the past? He knew, as you have told me, of your escape with Martinez from the islands, for Martinez had told the whole story in his delirium in the boat. He was on the ship which picked you up, and therefore he must have known that your story about the shipwreck was false—that you were not cast-away sailors but escaped convicts, wherefore his story of the real shipwreck and your rescue would be quite sufficient to connect you with the man who was sent for life to the Chinchas, to say nothing of the necessary abolition of your sometime accomplice, Martinez. No, no, Señor, memory or no memory, he is a living menace to you."

"And, therefore," said Staunton, after a long meditative pull at his cigar as he watched the blue rings curling up towards the maple panelled ceiling, "therefore, with your usual thoroughness of policy, I suppose you are going to counsel the completion of the work which the hatchet would have finished there and then, if I hadn't been faint with hunger and thirst, and dizzy with delirium. Frankly, I don't like the idea. I suppose I have become, if not more moral, at least more fastidious since those wild old days came to an end. I fight with money, with my own and other men's brains, not with hatchets. They are too much like the savage's tomahawk. In other words, I suppose I have become civilised. No, no, we must not talk about abolition. I will have no bloodshed until it becomes absolutely necessary. Ah! wait a moment, we ought to have some of the reports by this time. This may be something."

The telephone bell rang softly as he spoke. He got up and took the transmitter from the hook.

"Very well," he said, after listening for a few moments; "kindly ask Mr. Morton to come here."

He put the transmitter back and said, as he sat down:

"I had an idea it was Morton. As I told you, as soon as I made that unfortunate discovery, I put him on to look up the Ellerton family history with a special reference to Master Wilfrid's doings since he came back from sea. There he is! Would you mind opening the door, Ramiero?"

Valdez rose and noiselessly opened the double doors.

"Come in, Mr. Morton," said Staunton, leaning back on his sofa and lighting a fresh cigar.

The Honourable Reginald Morton, close-clipped, clean-shaven, well-set-up, and perfectly dressed walked in, with glossy hat in hand, as Valdez closed the doors behind him.

As he will play no insignificant part in the present narrative the reader may as well make his acquaintance here as elsewhere.

He was one of those social products which have come into being since the aristocrats opened their arms and their houses to the plutocrats. He was the younger son of Sir Reginald Wriothesley Morton, a baronet of long descent and ancient

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creation whose position in Society was rather too big for his means, and who was further burdened by the possession of three marriageable daughters who cost a great deal to keep in the social swim, and whose matrimonial prospects had remained at the vaguest for some four seasons. The elder son Wriothesley had inherited a nice little fortune from his grandmother and also occupied a very snug permanent secretaryship, and the two combined to raise him above the reach of financial temptation.

Reginald had begun the world with a good education, a very fair Oxford degree, perfect manners, a limitable assurance, and a very easy conscience. His leanings were towards finance, and his father's influence had got him a very decent berth in a big stockbroker's firm, and through this channel he had drifted into connection with Isolo Staunton, and so far now, as the world knew, he was one of the millionaire's confidential secretaries. As a matter of fact he was his social spy. His birth and breeding gave him the *entrée* to the most exclusive circles. He knew how to keep his eyes and his ears open and his mouth shut, and however unscrupulous he was in getting information it was part of his social creed to be absolutely true to his salt. At present the said salt was worth about two thousand a year to him, to say nothing of the good things he was always getting on to, the plums and currants, as it were, that were left behind when his employer had taken his own slice out of the financial cake.

"Good afternoon, Morton," said Staunton genially; "there's whisky and soda, help yourself and take a cigar. You've got some news, I suppose?"

"Yes," replied Morton, putting down his hat and taking a cigar, "about the Ellertons, of course. Not very much that isn't generally known, I am afraid. They are not a family with secrets, you know. They are not old enough to have cupboards with skeletons in them. Sir Wilfrid makes no secret of his humble origin—rather glories in it, in fact, after the manner of self-made men who have had the good sense not to turn out misfits. I've traced the family tree back for three generations, and there the roots lose themselves in quite hopeless obscurity. Authentic history seems to begin with Sir Wilfrid and his son, and of course everyone knows who and what Sir Wilfrid is and was."

"Anything about the son?" asked Staunton carelessly. "I suppose he has not done anything to particularly distinguish himself yet, has he?"

"No," replied the spy, looking at the ash on his cigar; "his general reputation is almost monotonously excellent. His manners and breeding seem to point to some remote ancestry to which he has harked back. He's a sportsman, though, and does everything that a gentleman ought to know and do, a great favourite with women, whom he rather tolerates than worships, which is perhaps the only peculiar thing about him except the past."

"His past!" echoed Staunton, with a slight lift of his eyebrows. "Surely he is rather young to have a past, isn't he?"

"You've noticed that curious streak of white hair that he has over his left ear?"

"Yes," said Staunton, with a half-stifled yawn. "Has that anything to do with his past? I did notice it the other day, now I come to think of it."

"No, it isn't that, but it is connected with the only curious fact in the whole of my investigations."

"And that?"

"Well it seems that when he was quite a lad Master Wilfrid showed his independence in character by running away to sea. He got round the Horn and up to Valparaiso, and thence up to Callao and Peru, and then somewhere off the coast he got wrecked. He was saved with two or three sailors in a boat, went pretty nearly mad with hunger and thirst, and that's all he remembers, and he came to himself weeks afterwards in New York. He can't remember the name of the ship he was wrecked in or who got away with him in the boat. All he does know was what they told him on the ship that picked him up, that there was one man lying dead in the boat and another dying, and that he had a cut in his skull that would have let the life out of anything but a boy. When the cut healed, curiously enough the hair grew over it again quite white. The other fellow who lived was quite a harmless lunatic and remembered nothing. They lost him in New York. That was Master Wilfrid's little mystery of the sea. But anyhow, it is true because he told me himself."

"Thank you, Morton," said Staunton, with an air of boredom which was so admirably simulated that it looked as though he were trying to disguise it. "I'm afraid your investigations have not been very fertile, though, of course, you have found out everything that there was to find. Your last item is of course romantic, if unimportant, still it is interesting as a curious little bit of psychology. Did he tell you, by the way, whether anything had been tried to get his lost memory back."

"Well," replied the spy, "of course his father wanted all sorts of things done, but Wilfrid absolutely refused to have his skull fooled about with. He argued that, after all, it didn't matter having those few weeks cut out of his life. The episode was over, and everybody connected with it was dead, except himself. His brain wasn't injured—as it certainly was not seeing what he has done with it since—and the result has been that he has had his own way, and that is about the end of it."

"A wise decision," said Staunton carelessly. "I'm going for a couple of months' cruise, and if you care to take a holiday for that time in your usual social happy hunting ground I hope you will do so. And now, if you really won't have a whisky and soda I needn't detain you any longer."

FOURTH CHAPTER.

Sentence of Living Death.

"Well, friend Ramiero, what do you think of that?" said Staunton as Morton disappeared, and Valdez closed the double doors behind him, "there doesn't seem to be very much danger as long as my late shipmate adheres to that very convenient resolution of his, not to let the doctors make experiments with his skull. That I think relieves me from the disagreeable necessity of adopting your unpleasantly drastic proposal as to speedy and permanent abolition."

"I am afraid I cannot see eye to eye with you there, señor," said Valdez, meditatively rolling another of his everlasting little brown cigarettes. "My own opinion is the same as it was before, and if anything stronger."

"But how can that possibly be when the fellow has absolutely forgotten about everything that happened then?" exclaimed Staunton, a trifle impatiently.

"A danger that is only latent, señor," replied Valdez slowly, "is not a danger which has been abolished. What I mean is that this young man's memory of those few weeks, which means as he thinks so little to him, and which, as you know, means so much to you, may have been totally destroyed. On the other hand it may only be in abeyance."

"You mean, of course," said Staunton, with a faint echo of anxiety in his voice, "that if Master Wilfrid were to meet with another accident to his head, say a fall in the hunting field, rendering an operation necessary, the doctors might insist on operating upon that part now injured? Well, granted such a remote contingency might possibly come to pass, I don't see how we are going to prevent it, unless by means which I will really not consent to."

"There are others not quite so drastic," murmured the Spaniard in a gently suggestive tone. He paused for a few moments, but Staunton made no sign, and he went on speak-

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ing, now quickly and earnestly. "You must forgive my insistence, señor, but this, as you must see, is not a matter to be played with. Who is this young man, or what is his family to you or to us? His family are nothing. He is a constant source of danger. Think of it, I pray you. All the splendid promise of your life work, your liberty, perhaps your very life, depends perhaps upon the continued pressure of a little splinter of bone on that boy's brain. Even if he had a serious illness, say a fever of some sort, the injury would at once be aggravated. The doctors would at once inquire into the cause. For my part I am perfectly certain as to what they would find, and, therefore, as to what they would do, and Wilfrid Ellerton would rise from his bed with those few weeks put back into his life. What, I ask you, señor, in all earnestness, might be the possible results of such a recovery to you and to us? And then," he went on with a sudden softening and lowering of his tone, "there is the Señorita Mercedes. What would become of all the brilliant prospects that lie before her if Wilfrid Ellerton became able to tell the story of those two or three weeks, and if the Peruvian Minister in London demanded an inquiry? I need not remind you that once suspected, not even your millions would buy indemnity for the son of the man they still call the tyrant Zuarez."

"Heavens, no!" exclaimed Staunton, getting on to his feet and thrusting his hands into his trousers' pockets. "No, you are right. Whatever happens there must be no danger to Mercedes' future."

He began to walk up and down the room, his hands still deep in his pockets, and his eyes fixed on the dull red Turkey carpet. Valdez rolled and lit another cigarette, and smoked in silence. He knew his chief's mind too well to interrupt the train of thought which he had set in action, and he was right, for Isolo Staunton was thinking quite as hard just now as he had done that day in the lanes and fields of Cricklewood. For him the whole world only held one human being whom he loved with the passion of absolutely disinterested devotion, and that was his beautiful nineteen-year-old daughter Mercedes, a child of a boy and girl marriage, born only a year before the heavy hand of the law had fallen upon him and thrust him into the living grave of the Chinchas. Her mother had died of grief and shame, and some had whispered of starvation, too, during his captivity, and it was not until ten years later, when the foundations of his mysteriously sudden fortune had been laid, that his agents had been able to trace her to the convent school of La Merced in Lima for orphan girls, and been allowed to take her away to the care of a father who was obliged to remain nameless, leaving a splendid contribution to the school endowment in exchange for her.

Every advantage that love could suggest or money could buy had been lavished on her since then. This season she had made an informal, but brilliant, entry upon the social stage. Next year she was to be presented by a Duchess and an aunt of a Cabinet Minister, and already her extreme beauty, enhanced if possible by the golden halo of her father's uncounted millions, had set busy tongues wagging as to the magnificence of the social future which might be hers if she chose. Certainly this exquisite girl, with her delicate and yet radiant Andalusian beauty, made more bewitching yet by the dash of Celtic fire, this daughter of the great financier who was also the friend and confidant of rulers and statesmen, might surely look high.

And for her, his beautiful, idolised Mercedes, to find herself banished from that brilliant-seeming world, whose confines she was only just crossing, as the daughter of an escaped convict and the murderer of his companions. For her to endure the agony of seeing him, the father whom she adored, and the father whom she honoured above all other men, as it were, stripped naked in the world's market-place amidst the jeers and laughter of his rivals and enemies, and taken from her for ever either to the scaffold or to the long despair of the living death—no, anything better than that. Don Ramiero had kept his best argument to the last, and he had got it home. Whatever there might be necessary to prevent it, that catastrophe at least must not happen. Of what consequence was this lad's life or a dozen lives for the matter of that in comparison with the present and future happiness of his Mercedes?

He stopped opposite Valdez and said quietly:

"Yes, my friend, you are right, that must not be. Rather than risk any danger to her I would even go to the extremity you suggested. At the same time I must remind you that even with the facilities which we have at our disposal it is not the easiest thing in the world to arrange for the disappearance of the son and heir of one of the best known men in the country. We are not in Peru, you know, nor have we got him there. Mere assassination, I think you will agree with me, is not to be thought of in such an absurdly over-civilised country as this, and as far as I can see deportation would be every bit as difficult and just as risky. Have you any idea on the subject?"

"I have been thinking, señor," replied Valdez, after a few meditative puffs, "that it would not be altogether impossible to enlist this inconvenient young man in our company of submarine toilers up north yonder. They, as you know, are to be trusted utterly since faith with them is a matter not only of wealth and comfort, but, as they well know, of life and death, and once among them down yonder in the bowels of the earth, fifty fathoms beneath the bottom of the North Sea, he would be as safe as though the condors had already

Mercedes' right hand was lying on the rails. Ellerton's hand fell gently upon it, and the next second his arm would have been around her waist.

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picked his bones at the bottom of one of the gorges of the Andes."

"Friend Ramiero," said Staunton, dropping on the sofa and again taking out a fresh cigar, "allow me to congratulate you upon a most excellent idea. If you could only see your way to carrying it out without arousing suspicions, you will have made me your debtor for life. Permanent exile in the home of our trusty Cyclops will meet the case much more decently than assassination. We could make him work too. They say he has quite a hereditary genius for engineering, and as for escape, he might as well try to get out of a diving bell at the bottom of the ocean. The only question is to get him there. Have you any idea on the subject?"

"It may be difficult, but it may not be impossible," replied Valdez musingly. "Of course the main point is to get him on board the *Isola* without the knowledge of any of his acquaintances. Then the matter would be as easy as taking him into one room from another. Or, stay, permit me a few moments' thought. I think I see a means of arranging his disappearance, which will be as satisfactory to us as it will be convincing to the young gentleman's relatives and friends."

For the next five minutes or so Don Ramiero sipped his wine, puffed at his cigarette, and stared with fixed pupils at a little gem of marine painting on the wall opposite to him. Staunton saw that his active, subtle brain was hard at work, and so he respected his silence. Presently Ramiero dropped his cigarette in the ash tray, moistened his lips with wine, and said as quietly as though he were proposing a most ordinary commercial deal instead of a project for destroying the happiness of a family and condemning a bright young life full of the promise of youth, happiness and usefulness to the misery of a living death, to a doom worse even than that of the felon in penal servitude:

"I think I have it. I know you have always believed as I have done that the boldest measures are after all the safest and the best. I propose, therefore, that you should put off our trip to the South for a little, as you can easily do since they have abundance of metal to work on down yonder, take the *Isola* round to Cowes for a week, and meanwhile, let the señorita send out invitations in your name for a trip afterwards, say to the Fjords of Norway, and see that Mr. Ellerton junior is one of the party. Our friend Morton can easily manage that for you. I don't think there will be much difficulty in getting a party for the *Isola*, especially with the señorita as hostess. Half London will envy those who are invited.

"If you will arrange that, señor, and leave the rest to me, I think I shall be able so to control circumstances, that one night there shall be a cry of 'Man overboard!' raised possibly by myself. At the same time, or soon after, there may be a little accident to the engines which will make it necessary for us to come to at our old anchorage for an hour or so. I need hardly say that the man had not gone overboard, he will be below in a certain chamber that I need not mention, being duly prepared for a little dive in his sleep—and when he wakes it will be in the under world which owns you for its master. I trust you follow me?"

"Yes," said Staunton briskly, "I do. You are a genius, Ramiero. We will do it."

FIFTH CHAPTER.

Love at Second Sight.

"After all it must seem even to you—you who have seen so much of the world and all the chances and changes of this transitory life, if I may say so without irreverence—that we should meet again under such wonderfully altered circumstances. You don't seem even yet to quite recognise it, but I can assure you that it really is so.

"You were the boy and I was the girl. Surely you remember that afternoon when the Chilenos sacked and burnt Chorillos—when the warships were firing from the sea and the shells were bursting among the houses, blowing their roofs off—not that they mattered much, for you must remember that it never rains there, and many of them were only thatched with reeds—and how the walls of the houses burst out as though a volcano had broken out under them as it did once at Arequipa, and how a scream came through the air, and you, yes, I am sure it was you, caught a little girl—that was I—round the waist and jumped off the pier into the water with her and swam back to the beach—and how we found afterwards that the shell had smashed everything into ruins and killed everyone just there on the promenade in the front of the Marine Hotel. They told me afterwards what a dreadful ruin it was. But surely you remember, don't you?"

"Remember, of course I do. As if anyone could forget a thing like that. Yes, I can see every detail of it now. I remember the dull, hoarse bang of the gun and the scream of the shells in the air—and you, were you really the little girl that I got hold of and jumped into the sea with, because I thought it was going to kill us?"

"Us! I don't—or at least I don't think I thought then, Mr. Ellerton, that you were thinking very much about *us*—"

At that instant the sentence was cut short by the sudden flashing of the electric lights along the promenade deck of the *Isola*, on which Mercedes Staunton and Wilfrid Ellerton were standing, leaning on the rails just under the port end of the navigating bridge as the yacht was swirling smoothly eastward and northward along the Hampshire coast with the Spithead forts about three miles behind her.

As the lights gleamed out about them their eyes met, and for the first time in his life Wilfrid Ellerton looked into the eyes of a woman and saw in their deep, dark depths that revelation which comes at least once in his life to every man, and Mercedes, as she looked up into his, saw that which comes, alas, not always to every woman.

The distance between two human souls is really greater than that between the planets or the stars, and yet in an instant it may be bridged over infinitely more swiftly than the ray of light can connect world with world or sun with sun.

Thousands of millions of human beings have lived upon earth knowing as little of each other and caring as little as though they had lived upon different worlds, and yet in millions of cases it has happened that two of these beings have been brought together, oftentimes from the uttermost ends of the earth—and instantly, as they have looked into each other's eyes for the first time, the distance that was between them has been annihilated, and their souls have come together.

Between man and man and woman and woman, this coming together is called friendship, between man and woman it is called love, the greatest and the holiest and most sacred of all those mighty mysteries with which this little commonplace, human life of ours is so strangely surrounded.

Had the revelation come to them under different circumstances; had they been walking over one of the lonely moorlands, whose bleak solitude and lonely beauty formed Wilfrid Ellerton's earliest recollections, or along one of the high dykes dividing the rice fields and the cane patches which make green the valley of the Rimac from the sea into the grey-brown, barren hills of the Andes, then what their souls had said to each other with their eyes would have been repeated by their lips both in words and in that more eloquent language of love in which the lips are silent.

But the sudden flash of the electric light along the deck, followed by the sound of laughter and conversation as some of the *Isola's* company came out of the big drawing-room on deck, made that impossible. In a few moments they had ceased to be alone and were part of this same company, for nowhere is solitude more difficult than on board ship.

Mercedes' hand was lying on the rails. Wilfrid looked at it for just a moment. The next his own right hand fell gently upon it. If they had been alone his left arm would have been round her waist, and many things about to happen would never have come to pass. As it was there was only time for a swift pressure and another glance from soul to

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soul through their eyes, and they had to leave the rail with the fateful words unspoken, so that Mercedes might join her guests and continue her duties as hostess.

For the next two days Wilfrid lived in a state of mental exaltation, which was no less wonderful than it was delightful to him. When he met Mercedes on deck the next morning before breakfast, she was walking arm-in-arm with Lady Maud Hyam, who, with her beloved young Hercules and several other members of Lady Medcalf-Mears' very exclusive set, were guests on board the yacht.

It was impossible, in view of her own recent experiences, for Lady Maud not to know the meaning of the swift half-shy, half-eager glance which passed between them as he raised his cap and said "good morning." She pressed Mercedes' arm ever so slightly, and as Mercedes turned and looked at her with a quick, bright flush and a startled expression in her eyes, she laughed, and said:

"Good morning, Mr. Ellerton, isn't this weather perfectly glorious? And what a lot of good it seems to be doing everybody. Just look what a lovely colour our charming hostess has got."

"Yes," replied Ellerton, rather awkwardly, for such a straight-spoken man, "but you see, Lady Maud, that if one couldn't look very well, and," he continued, after the briefest of pauses, during which he looked at Mercedes, "and, as you say, have a delightful colour, and feel as though this was really the best of all possible worlds, in such absolutely perfect weather, and on such a gorgeous yacht as this—where on earth or sea could you feel thoroughly fit, and therefore look it?"

"Just exactly my sentiments," said Captain Percy Iddison, who lounged up towards them just as this moment, tubbed and shaved and clad in immaculate flannels, careless, happy, and yet, though he knew it not, one of those unconscious instruments of Fate which, through the medium of just a few idle words, may alter the courses of other lives.

"Miss Staunton, and you, too, my lady," he began again, with a smile and a bow towards his radiant sweetheart, "I want you to allow me to take Ellerton away for a moment. "I have noticed that he is looking a little, well, flushed, almost feverish, in fact, and I have discovered a peculiarly soothing and generally delightful cocktail. The fact is, of course, that I want one myself, and I don't care to have it alone. It's a bad habit, you know, which one learns in those desolate places of the earth where it is sometimes easier to get a drink before breakfast than it is to get the breakfast itself."

"That, Percy," said Lady Maud, drawing Mercedes somewhat reluctantly aside, "is merely a specious excuse for quite unnecessary depravity. Still, I know it is not the slightest use trying to argue with a man on that subject, and so I suppose we shall have to let you go."

"And I hope you won't forget," said Mercedes, still laughing and looking first at Wilfrid and then at Iddison, "what they say in South America about cocktails."

"Dear me," exclaimed Lady Maud. "May I ask what *you* know about cocktails before breakfast?"

"Not guilty," laughed Mercedes in reply. "I have never tasted that form of refreshment in my life. It is only what I have heard my father say and there certainly seems to be a good deal of sense in it. It is this," she went on, with another look at the two young men, "one is enough, two are too many, and three are nothing like enough."

"Exactly!" said Ellerton. "Therefore, Iddison, it's got to be just one, and if we don't hurry up and get it the breakfast bugle will go."

Scarcely had the two young men strolled away, than Staunton and Ramiero Valdez came up out of the saloon and joined them.

If Staunton had only seen one of the glances that had passed between his daughter and Wilfrid during the brief conversation, the crime which had already been decided upon would never have been committed, and many things which came to pass in consequence of it would never have happened.

Another long instalment of this serial next week.

Your Editor Chats.

This week another adventure which befell Miss Sara Gillespie, in her flight from her pursuers, is related. Northampton is the scene of the episode, and all citizens of the famed boot-making town will be, I am sure, delighted with the photographs that are reproduced.

From all sides I have received intimations assuring me that great interest has been aroused in this series, and in letters from readers, there often recur the words "I only hope that the coming instalments will be as absorbing as the opening ones." Now, of course, I have had the privilege of already seeing the future episodes, and I can unreservedly say that nobody need have any fear that the realisations of their hopes will suffer in comparison with their anticipations.

Sara will relate in our next issue what happens to her at Leicester. There is no need for me to say anything in recommendation of this instalment, but I can promise you that it is a splendid one.

I have now an announcement to make which is of especial interest to residents in Leicester and district.

I want readers of that town who feel sufficiently interested in this series to help to make it known in their district, by handing a few leaflets to their friends. As an inducement for you to do so, I will offer a Gramophone to the Leicester reader who makes the best use of his leaflets, and a charming little gold-plated pencil case to *each* of the *twelve* persons who show the next greatest amount of ingenuity in the distribution. You may personally hand each leaflet to a friend, with a remark about "The Pursuit of Sara"; you may place the leaflets in conspicuous positions; you may push them through letter-boxes or doors; or you can do exactly as you think wisest and best. The prizes will go to those readers who distribute the leaflets in the most novel and helpful way; the number you get rid of is not of so much consequence. To obtain them, drop a postcard, with "Leaflets" marked in the top, left-hand corner, to "The Editor, *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, W.C.

Our Gramophones are beautiful pieces of mechanism, and one of these musical instruments would be a boon to any household. They are fitted with a concert sound-box, and accompanied by two records.

Come, Leicester readers, make a good bid for that Gramophone, and the special consolation prizes. All of you have equal opportunities.

On page 560, the new serial story from the pen of Mr. George Griffith commences. It is a powerful romance, in which masterly crime plays an important part, crossing, as it does the path of love, totally contrary to the expectations of Isolo Staunton, criminal millionaire. It is an old adage that says that "the course of true love never runs smooth," and our new serial is an excellent illustration to its truth. As the story continues, the plot becomes stronger and stronger, till the great climax is reached. "A Criminal Millionaire" should appeal to all who enjoy reading good literature.

I will announce, as soon as possible, and I expect it to be at a very early date, the result of the recent "Juggled Letters" Competition.

Your Editor.

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A Wilful Girl.

Relating How She Won a Young Doctor's Heart.

"THIS can't last!"

Doctor George Gordon sprang from his chair with the words, and began to pace his office floor from wall to wall.

It was a miserable, drizzly November day, but Doctor Gordon's vehement exclamation had no reference to the weather. It was directed towards the unfortunate aspect of Fate in general, and his own affairs in particular.

Three weeks ago, full of hope and energy, he had started his practice in this little quiet street, and had begun his professional career. That is, he would have begun it, had any requisition for his services been made; but, with the exception of one or two cases, no hint or shadow of practice had fallen in his way. His funds were running low, his sturdy patience seemed to droop, at last, and hope no longer answered his misgivings with a smile. Worst of all, a terrible loneliness had fallen suddenly upon him—the forerunner of despair.

"It can't last!" he repeated desperately, pushing his fine white hands through his brown curling hair. And at that instant the door-bell rang.

Hastily opening a heavy volume or two, to convey the idea that his studies were suddenly interrupted, and assuming a calm, professional air, Doctor Gordon proceeded to the door.

This time it was neither peddler, book-agent, nor machine oil, but a lovely young woman, in a blue waterproof, with chestnut hair in glossy rings on her white forehead. She held a little boy by the hand—a boy who had evidently been crying loud and long, and was still in good condition for an indefinite continuation of the exercise.

"Doctor Gordon?"

The doctor bowed, and the young lady lowered her umbrella.

"I am glad we have found you in," she said, smiling, and disclosing two distracting dimples. "My little brother has crushed his hand. I want you to examine it, please. We feared there might be bones broken—it has been so painful."

"We shall soon find out," answered the doctor briskly, his elastic spirits rising wonderfully as he ushered in his visitors. "I was about to make a call or two" (which was true—he had intentions of going out for a cigar and a newspaper), "but nothing very urgent. Be seated, please. I will let in more light. Now, then, my little man; will you come here to me?"

"Tommy, dear," said the young lady, very gently and tenderly, as Tommy leant his head against her and began to sob, "let me see now how brave you can be. And doctor won't hurt you—I am sure he won't"—with an eloquent glance at the individual in question.

"Not one bit, or so very little that you won't mind it at all."

"And Dora will stay by you"—putting her arm round his neck and drawing him gently towards the consulting chair. "That's my own good boy. And to-morrow you will be ever so much better. Now, doctor, see, he is going to be splendid!"

To Doctor Gordon's credit be it said, he conducted his examination with coolness and cleverness, albeit this pretty creature hung over him enveloping him in her exquisite magnetism, and thrilling him deliciously now and then, as the folds of her dress touched him or their fingers met accidentally in their mutual attention to the case.

When the bones were declared to be intact, and the hand dressed and bandaged, then came the story of the accident's happening—in fact, almost half an hour of bright, pleasant talk; then thanks and gratitude, and—"How much must I pay you, doctor?"

The idea of paying him for this gleam of warmth and sunshine that had come into his blank and dreary life!

But he mentioned his modest fee in a business-like manner, and received it with professional ease. Such a dear little purse and such a slender, pretty hand, and such a kind, innocent, charming face! It was hard to think he might never see her again.

At parting he made an effort. As she opened her umbrella again and the blue eyes looked at him smilingly from a background of rain and mist and dreariness, he observed in an off-hand way:

"Please bring the boy in to me in a day or two. I shall want to examine his progress. Let me see—Wednesday—well bring him on Friday. Oh, not at all? I think he will do nicely now. Thanks—good-bye."

And as he looked after the trim little figure of his visitor he suddenly realised that he did not even know her name, except that part of it was "Dora."

It never rains but it pours. It both rained and poured on this eventful evening. To his surprise and deep thankfulness, the doctor received two other calls before midnight, and on the following day three more. He began again to feel of use and importance in the world. The blue waterproof, the dimples and smiling eyes, had brought him what the gamblers call a "streak of luck," or so he firmly believed.

When Friday arrived he was quite in a flutter of expectation, and sported a new necktie for the occasion. At half-past ten the office bell rang. It was the advent he hoped for.

"Oh, good morning!"

Fresh as the morning itself she looked, in a pretty costume of brown cashmere, with a sweeping feather in her hat, a bunch of sweet violets at her belt, and a world of light and sweetness in her eyes. Tommy, at her side, nodded quite tolerantly in answer to his share of the doctor's greeting.

"Such a lovely day. Did you expect us?" (Did he?) "Oh, yes, so *much* better. It is quite easy now—Tommy, isn't it? We are glad we came to *you*. Our old doctor—Doctor Briggs—was ill, and we did not know where to come—

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did we, Tommy? And I said, let us try here. How do you do, doctor. Are you well?"

By this time they were in the office, and she was regarding him with a friendly, somewhat thoughtful, scrutiny.

"Quite well, thanks."

"I thought you did not look so very well that other day, you seemed so pale. I suppose you work too hard. All you doctors do."

"When we are fortunate enough to have the chance. I believe I have grown pale longing for work. I am only just beginning here, you know."

"Ah," with a glance full of interest. "Are you a stranger, then?"

"Quite a stranger. I came from Somerset. All my people are there. I sometimes think it was a wild venture of mine to come to London to begin my profession."

"All your people? Oh, that is dreadful! Have you no friends here—*no* one?"

"I am entirely alone."

"How strangely you must feel. I should think it would be terrible to live like that"—with another long, thoughtful look. "Oh, well," breaking into a smile, "I am sure you will make a practice here. You will not mind it so much when you have plenty of business. *We* will do what we can to help you, and we know lots of people. Tommy, darling, take your hat off. Come here to me. I'll undo the bandage. Now, let Doctor Gordon see. I don't think he will lose the nails after all."

"Very satisfactory indeed," said Doctor Gordon. "I can see that you have followed my directions."

"Oh, yes; of course"—lifting up her earnest face. "He was very good about it. He let me bathe it and dress it, and I know it must have hurt him."

"He had a very gentle nurse."

The doctor was busy over the wounded hand as he made this remark.

"I tried to be as gentle as you were," was the quick response. "Your hands seemed so light and kind. It must be beautiful to be able to help people and relieve pain."

"Pain that can be relieved—yes," said the doctor, feeling quite charmed that she had noticed his hands, which, indeed, were well worth noticing, and accustomed to receive a good deal of his own attention. "If we could only reach mental suffering as easily."

"Ah! I know very little about that"—she shook her head with a pretty seriousness. "I've never had real trouble yet. It frightens me when I think how happy I've been."

"Frightens you? Why?"

"Because all my suffering is yet to come."

"Oh, mine isn't!" said Tommy, nodding with an air of triumph. "I've had lots of pain. I sprained my ankle once, and I fell down the cellar stairs, and a boy gave me a black eye, and the ear-ache and the mumps, and no end of tooth-ache. But this hand—that was worse than all. I think I am getting all *my* sufferings now."

"You and I, Tommy—we know what it is to have afflictions," said Doctor Gordon, with his hand on Tommy's shoulder. "Happy people, like your sister, can only wonder at us. It must be very nice to be so—so content and at peace with Fate."

"Don't you feel happy, too?" she asked, with womanly pity in her tone. "I should think you would love your profession."

"I do love it certainly; but it is not *all* my life. I want other things—friends, companionship. The struggle with poverty is dreadful when one is alone."

"You are not married?"

This question was asked with delightful straightforwardness, the candid eyes looked frankly into his.

"I have not that good fortune—yet."

They both flushed slightly; the young lady glanced away, and said quickly—

"Well, you will not *always* be alone, unless you wish to be. And I know you will succeed in your profession; your manner is so pleasing and sympathetic, you inspire confidence at once. And I am sure—I am very sure—you must be clever."

"Oh, thanks, you are too kind," murmured the doctor, as much astonished as pleased by this innocent, delicious flattery. "I owe you my heartfelt gratitude for your kindness—your encouragement. I was almost despairing. I shall always believe it was my good angel who sent you—and Tommy—to my rescue."

"It was *our* good angel, perhaps, who showed us how to find *you*," was the smiling, unembarrassed answer. "I felt an interest in you at once. I told mamma about you as soon as I went home, and she is coming to see you too. But now we must go. I will leave you my card, though, because"—with an arch look—"you don't even know my name yet. And I want to leave you this little bunch of violets, too, if you will accept them. I think there is such companionship in flowers, if one feels lonely or sad."

She disengaged the little bouquet from her belt and the doctor took it, and the kindly hand that offered it, into his own an instant.

"I don't know what to say to you—I can't express my sense of your goodness, so undeserved."

"Oh, that's nothing! I love to give flowers to people who care for them—that is one of my pleasures. Well, good-bye. Shall I need to bring Tommy in again—or is it all right?"

"If you could let me see him in three or four days from now," returned the doctor, with gravity. "It is not absolutely necessary, but if you have time, you might bring him in, and—a—a——"

"Very well. Some time next week then. Good-bye. I do hope you'll gets lots of patients—of course, I don't hope that people will be ill, poor things; but I mean that if they must be ill, I hope they will send for you. And don't feel lonely or depressed, remember. I *did* think you looked *so sad* that first day. Good-bye."

As soon as he was alone, Doctor Gordon took up the little square of pasteboard from the table and read, "Dora Hartley, 98, West Street, Kensington." He actually put it to his lips. Then he threw it down quickly, and hastily drew from the vest pocket above his heart a girl's photograph, at which he looked long and fondly.

"You would not mind, Clara, darling," he murmured, half aloud. "She is such an utter child."

The apology which Doctor Gordon offered so fervently to the portrait of his soul's idol, in extenuation of a kiss bestowed on Miss Hartley's printed name was merely the first of a long series of such apologies and protestations. During the next four weeks Clara's picture was in constant requisition. He bestowed on it confessions and explanations that would have astonished the original, to whom his semi-weekly letters conveyed no hint of the existence of "Dora."

But in the life of Doctor Gordon, Dora was an accomplished fact, and a wonderfully bright and important one. She recommended him right and left among her friends, and sent him some excellent paying cases, in which his usually superior skill made itself apparent. She even persuaded her mother, whose health was uniformly excellent, that she needed medical advice, and at once Doctor Gordon was summoned—the

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result, his instalment as family physician, and a pleasant revenue from Mr. Hartley's purse. Added to this, he was petted and made much of by the entire family. But Dora remained his special ally and friend. She used to run into his office on all sorts of pretences—sometimes escorted by one of her brothers (of whom there were five), sometimes by the huge Newfoundland dog, sometimes only by her own innocence.

Doctor Gordon had begun by declaring that Dora was "an utter child." Before long he discovered a certain tact and womanliness that astonished him. She would discuss his affairs with him in the gravest way, and make little practical suggestions, full of commonsense; give him hints as to the foibles and weaknesses of certain of the new people she introduced, and in innumerable ways, help and strengthen him. She made "tidies" for his chairs, pillows for his sofa, painted vases for his mantel, mended his gloves, darned his handkerchiefs, objected to his neckties, criticised his linen, in short, surrounding him with an intoxicating atmosphere of femininity that fascinated and bewildered him. Through it all she preserved her direct, child-like manner.

"You would not believe," she would say to him, with her elbows on the table beside him, and hands clasped under her white chin—a favourite attitude. "You'd not believe how much I liked you that first day. It seemed so odd—the very first time we met. Somehow I felt as if I had always known you, and oh! I knew very well we were going to be friends! At least, I made up my mind about it"—and then, without the slightest change of tone, "Do you think those curtains look all right? I imagine they ought to be fuller. If I were you I'd have dark-red ones. I saw some in Stewart's the other day." Or else, rushing in, flushed and smiling, she would say, out of breath: "Oh, dear, I can't stay, but I thought I *must* run in for a minute! I have brought you some oranges for your cold—they are lovely and sweet. I was just carrying some to old Mrs. Shannon—she's the dearest old thing, and her cold is terrible, worse than yours. Do, please, take care of yourself. I sha'n't have any peace till you are better—both of you."

Then in a flash she was gone again. She seemed especially anxious lest he should feel too keenly the loneliness of his life, and tried constantly to brighten his solitude with a thousand gentle cares and attentions.

He felt deeply touched, and blessed her from his heart for all her goodness, but his mind was full of uneasiness as he found himself forced to the conclusion that Dora was falling in love with him very fast indeed.

As their acquaintance progressed he could but notice a growing change in her manner—a sort of wistfulness and almost sadness at times, and his conscience smote him terribly that he had withheld from her the fact of his engagement. It seemed daily more impossible to divulge it without making himself seem like a villain, and yet to deliberately continue to conceal it was a villainy in itself.

As to the nature of his feelings for Dora, he was in a state of bewilderment. Her warmth of heart, her impetuous temper, her sweet, wilful, lovable ways, her very faults, were charming to him.

She was a constant study and delight; and yet, even if he were free—if he had never seen and chosen Clara—would Dora be the sort of woman he could wish to marry? He could not tell.

He only knew that the spell of her presence was upon him, and every meeting made the spell more strong.

Her family, too, seemed quite to accept him as their own, and to look upon his interests as their especial care. It was so pleasant to have friends of good standing, to feel himself no longer a waif and a stray in the great community.

But the price he paid threatened to be a hard one—the loss of his own self-respect. A time came when his conscience faced him with stern accusation, and commanded him to be true.

* * * * *

It was his birthday. Early in the morning there had come from Dora a pair of embroidered slippers and a lovely bunch of roses, and from each of the others some little token. His room was bright with pretty souvenirs, and the happy recipient sat brooding at his desk, wretched, penitent, torn with conflicting emotions—looking at Clara's photograph, and thinking, as usual, of Dora.

She had been so kind to him, so gracious and tender and generous, and now he must wring her guileless heart and stab her maiden pride, and lose her for ever!

He had at last made up his mind to write and tell her all—the paper lay spread before him, and he sat silent, thinking his miserable thoughts, and listening to the rush of the rain and the long, sweeping sigh of the wind.

He was trying to picture Dora as she would look when she read his letter. The sorrow and amazement in her sweet face; the blue eyes filled with passionate, regretful tears, or flashing scorn and anger; the little kindly, ministering hands clasped and trembling——

"Dora!"

Roused by some slight sound, he had turned and saw her in the room beside him. She was clad in the blue waterproof he had learnt to love.

The rain glistened on her hair, and her face was very pale; but she smiled a bright greeting.

"Don't scold; I *had* to come! I ran in by the alley. I was afraid some one might be here. It is just lovely to find you alone!"

Doctor Gordon looked at her with a sudden flush on his fair face. He rose; he could not trust himself to touch her hand.

"Take off that wet cloak," he said abruptly. "It is a terrible night for you to come out. What is the matter? Has anything happened?"

"Something is going to happen," she answered quietly, loosening her cloak and hanging it over a chair. Then with both hands she smoothed back the damp waves of her hair, and sat down in her favourite low chair beside the doctor's desk. He stood near her irresolutely a moment, but finally seated himself in his usual place.

"You look very pale, Dora. Are you ill?" He made a great effort to speak in his usual manner, but his voice trembled slightly.

"I am well enough—quite well; but," she pressed both hands against her heart, "like Hamlet, I can say, 'You little know how ill all's here.'"

Their eyes met in a long look, and a deep blush rose to her cheeks, but she did not avert her gaze.

"I—I was just thinking of you as you came in," the doctor murmured. It was not at all what he meant to say, but the truth has a habit of speaking itself at times. "I wanted to thank you for your beautiful flowers, and for—so many things. Dora, you have been more to me than I can—than I dare express. I wish you could know—could understand——"

"Do you think I have been good to you? Have I really made you a little bit happier? I longed to, because I—because you—— Oh, Doctor Gordon, you must let me speak to you and tell you!—my heart is so full. Don't think me wild or reckless, but there is something I must tell you!"

"Dora, Dora!" He caught her hand fervently in both his own. "I, too, have a confession to make. For weeks I have waited."

"Let me speak first," she said imploringly. "I came for that purpose. Doctor, I am going away from home; I am going in a few days—not to come back any more."

"You are going away?"

"No one knows of it—not even my own precious mother. I am going away—to be married."

The hand he had held so tenaciously was suddenly released.

"Married, Dora?"

"I did not tell you of my engagement. I thought perhaps mother had spoken of it. Yes, I have been engaged nearly five years; and I liked you first because your eyes are so like his—like Will's, you know. He is a doctor, too. He went away from London over a year ago to begin practice, just as you came here; and when you told me about being all alone, my heart went out to you so. I thought of my own poor

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boy; I knew how to sympathise with you and I longed to be your friend. I thought at once, 'If any one would take an interest in Will, and pet him and cheer him up and help him, how I *could* love that person!' And so I wanted to do everything I could for you. And I liked you so much, I *couldn't* go away and never tell you, nor say good-bye. Please—please don't look so sad! Are you angry with me? Do you think I am very wrong and wicked?"

"I! Ah, Dora, how much do you care for my thoughts of you *now?*"

"As much as ever," she said eagerly. "I have no friend in the world dearer than you are—you must know that. And will you tell mamma—will you talk to her? It is so dreadful to go away in this manner, but it must be done, sooner or later. If I should wait till Doomsday, they would never give their consent. Of course, when it is all over, they will forgive me and love me just the same. And you will coax mamma—won't you, doctor?—and say a good word for Dora when she is far away?" Her voice broke slightly, but she smiled bravely as she gave him her hand.

"Why must you go, dear?" he asked forlornly. "And what will become of *me?* I shall miss you so terribly, and you don't care at all. I can see by your eyes how happy you are."

"I am happy at heart," she answered earnestly—"very, very happy! I am glad I have decided. Surely, you must acknowledge my first duty is to Will, because I love him so dearly. He asks me to come to him, and it is my duty and my heaven to obey. My people will love him, too, bye-and-bye, when they know him better. They only oppose the marriage because they love me too much. I am sorry to leave you all, but I am, oh! *so* glad to go to Will!"

Doctor Gordon, holding the little hand between his own, looked regretfully in the little friendly face. Half an hour ago he was sorrowing for the pain he was about to inflict on this confiding innocent heart; and now the spectacle of her bright contentment wounded and angered him; his pride was terribly hurt. He had told himself passionately, that he would make any sacrifice, almost, to secure her happiness, and now that, without requiring the slightest sacrifice from him, she was supremely happy, he felt much injured and aggrieved.

"You mustn't be sorry," she said, very gently. "Of course you will miss me and I shall miss you—that is only natural; but we can write to each other, and as soon as I am forgiven I will come home on a visit, and I shall see you all!"

This and much more she told him in her gracious, kindly voice, trying to heal the wound that she began to think might have been deeper than she could have dreamt.

When it was time to part, she lifted her face and kissed him frankly and willingly, with a whispered: "God bless you, dear!"

For an instant Doctor Gordon's arms were round the damp waterproof and the slender figure beneath it, pressing them impartially to his heart. And then Dora was gone.

He sat quite a long time. Somehow, he had no need of Clara's photograph to strengthen him in his trial. He would not feel exactly at home in expressing his emotions to that calm and placid image.

Madeline Bridges.

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A JUSTIFIED BURGLAR.

A Story with a Moral to Husbands.

ARNOLD TODD must have become accustomed to it, for periodically burglars relieved him of all his pocket-money, diamonds and other personal *bric-a-brac* without ever being caught in the act or leaving any clue to their discovery. Nothing was ever taken belonging to Mrs. Todd, but, as that woman pathetically said, she had nothing they could take except her wedding-ring, which was on her finger, or her clothes, which would not have repaid the effort. For Mrs. Todd was a veritable household drudge. Her husband had houses and lands, as well as money in several banks, but he never gave her any of his wealth, and she had to beg for enough money to buy shoes and stockings for the children. Their clothes she made over from her own and their father's worn-out garments, and in making Mr. Todd's trousers into jackets for the little Todds she always managed to work the knees that bagged into the under side of elbows.

The burglaries did not worry Mr. Todd—if the truth were told—as much as they did Mrs. Todd. He usually waited until the stolen goods could not be recovered, then he purchased a new outfit and, after hiding them carefully every night for a few months he would grow careless and the burglars would give him another call. Mrs. Todd consistently promised to lie awake and watch, but she declared she must have been chloroformed, otherwise she would never have closed an eye.

"I should think, Mary," her husband complained, "that your anxiety about the children would keep you awake. Think what an effect it would have on them to see a burglar in their room!"

"But the burglars never go there," said Mrs. Todd faintly. "Children never have any valuables—at least ours don't," she added with unconscious sarcasm.

One night the unexpected happened. It was the turning-point in Mr. Todd's destiny. At the hour when he should have been sleeping the soundest he suddenly awakened and saw by the dim night light a strange figure in his room—that of a man muffled in a black cloak with a slouch hat drawn over his face and a silk muffler round his neck and chin. He was rifling Mr. Todd's pockets. Mr. Todd did not own a revolver. He would not have killed a man to save all his wealth, much as he loved it. He lay still for a moment, thinking how to surprise the burglar, then, having made up his mind to a plan, he put it into immediate execution. He leapt from the bed with a bound that took him into the middle of the room and pinioned the burglar from behind. A terrific scream rent the air. Todd held in a mighty grasp a limp, trembling form from which he tore the disguising cloak, revealing the partner of his joys and sorrows, Mrs. Todd.

"Mary!" he gasped. "Mary, you?"

"Yes, Mr. Todd, me." She turned and faced him. "Oh, you needn't be surprised. Where did you suppose I got any money if I didn't either steal it or beg it, seeing that you never gave me any. If I wanted a penny to put in the contribution box on Sunday I had to ask you for it, and explain what I was going to do with it. You never gave me a sovereign in your life without expecting nineteen shillings back in change."

"Mary!"

"It's the truth, and you know it, Arnold. Instead of making me a regular allowance, as any husband ought to, you make me save and scrimp and go without everything but food. Many a time I've left my empty purse lying about hoping you would take the hint and fill it. And you never did. And all the time you carried gold, silver and notes in your pocket—and bought what you wanted."

"You might have taken it without disguising yourself as a burglar, Mary."

"You would have suspected me, and how long could I have kept the money? No, the burglar was more welcome to it than I would have been. But I never dreamt that you would wake. I meant to jump out of the window if you did see me. Now, I do not care for myself—I am only sorry for you. The man who can drive a woman to such straits is to be pitied. I have as good a right to the money as you have—I helped to make it, and there is no law to convict a wife for stealing from her own husband."

Mr. Todd was seeing things past and present, and in those few moments of time as the dying do—clearly and without prejudice. He took his wife in his arms.

"You are nervous and tired, dear," he said. "Lie down and compose yourself to rest. I see, Mary, that I am the real burglar—I have robbed you of your earnings and your lawful dues. Before I sleep you shall have a bank account in your own name, and I will never ask what you do with the money. And you can give up being a burglar for good and all."

Henry Haines.

"AND you permitted this strange man to kiss you?" "No, mamma; he didn't give me time."

"IF you had no idea when you could get married, Tom, why did you propose?" "To tell the truth, dear, I had no idea that you would accept me."

MR. HIGHLIFE: "My dear, I'm going to turn over a new leaf!" Mrs. Highlife: "That's right. James says when you came out of your club last night you turned over a couple of pages."

"JOHN," whispered the good woman in the dead of the night, "there are burglars downstairs!" "You go down, dear," replied John, sleepily; "they wouldn't dare to strike a woman."

ARDENT SUITOR: "I lay my fortune at your feet." Fair Lady: "Fortune! I didn't know you had money." Ardent Suitor: "I haven't much, but it takes very little to cover those tiny feet." He got her.

AMBIGUOUS.—MRS. GRUE: "Henry, do you think you would ever marry again?" Grue: "What! After having lived with you for eleven years? Never!" (Mrs. Grue would give something handsome if she only knew just what he meant by that.)

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It Requires Practice.

Angela (to whom Edgar has been proposing): "Tell me, Edgar! Did you ever say anything like this to any woman before?" Edgar (in a burst of honesty): "My dear girl, do you think it could be done like that the first time?"

He Was a Bit of a Bore.

Reggy: "Do you really believe that absence makes the heart grow fonder?" Miss Brady: "Oh, yes, indeed. I think twice as much of you when you are somewhere else."

He'd Cause for Remembrance.

"Isn't it sad," asked the young lady romantically, "to think of the roses of yester year?" "It is," replied the young man emphatically; "I have an unpaid florist's bill for £10."

Worth the Trouble.

Cleverton: "Miss Twilling rejected me the other night, but she let me kiss her before we parted." Dashaway (reflecting): "I think I'll go round to-night and propose myself."

Well Experienced.

Paterfamilias: "And could you support my daughter, sir?" Her Lover: "I have two strong arms." Paterfamilias: "But can they support her?" Her Lover: "They often have, sir."

There Were Others, Too.

Mr. Gillis: "Surely, Miss Gray, you haven't forgotten me already? Why, I proposed to you at the seaside last summer." Miss Gray (much puzzled): "Can't you recall some other incident?"

And Ethel Blushed Vividly.

Tommy: "Yes, cats can see in the dark, and so can Ethel, 'cause when Mr. Wright walked into the parlour when she was sitting all alone in the dark, I heard her say to him, 'Why, Arthur, you didn't get shaved to-day.'"

Economical Wifey.

Husband: "Have you done your best to economise this month, Mary, as I requested?" Wife (brightly): "Oh, yes; I spoke to the grocer, the butcher, and the landlord, and got them to put off sending in their bills till next month."

He Has a Wife Now.

She (insinuatingly): "Are you looking for anybody, Mr. Johnson?" He: "Yes, I am looking for my wife." She (coquettishly): "I didn't know you had a wife." He: "No; that's just why I am looking for her." And he found her there and then.

Those Girls Again.

May: "He's awfully inquisitive. He tried his best to find out how old I am." Fanny: "Yes, he admitted that to me." May: "And just for fun I told him I was thirty-four. Did he tell you that?" Fanny: "No, but he did say you were the most truthful girl he had ever met."

A Very Convenient Arrangement.

Miss Manyseasons: "No, Mr. Bloom, I cannot be your wife, but I will be a sister to you." Mr. Bloom (youthful adorer): "You are very kind, and I know my mother will like that arrangement. She has often said I would have been a better man if I had had an elder sister to look after me. When will you begin your duties?"

So It Seemed.

Jack: "Does Miss Smythe return your affections?" Simon (tearfully): "The unopened envelope seems to indicate it!"

A Satisfactory Arrangement.

Miss Riche: "One can be very happy in this world with health and money." Suitor: "Then let's be made one. I have the health and you have the money."

Symptoms of Distress.

Mr. Jones: "That young Snodgrass seems like one of the family." His Only Daughter: "How so, papa?" Mr. Jones: "Why, he looks scared when your mother's anywhere near."

Drew His Conclusions.

Sandstone: "Weren't you dancing with Miss Calloway last night?" Fiddleback: "Yes; how did you know?" Sandstone: "I saw her going into a chiropodist's this morning."

Would Cause Excitement.

New Hubby: "I'm sorry, but I really can't let you see my wife if you wear that beautiful new hat. She's quite ill, and the doctor has expressly said that nothing must be allowed to excite her."

Then They Recommenced.

Wife (repentent after a little breeze): "If I were to die, Phil, what would you do?" Phil (sulkily): "I'd be nearly crazy, of course." Wife: "Would you marry again?" Phil: "No; I wouldn't be as crazy as that."

Worse Luck Impossible.

Patience: "Did you say Daisy is about to take her thirteenth husband?" Mabel: "Yes, I did." "Isn't she at all superstitious?" "Oh, yes; but she knows her thirteenth can't be any worse than the other twelve."

Expenses Not Allowed.

"Come, my darling," said the impatient lover at the foot of the ladder. "It's no use," replied she. "The elopement's off." "Why? What has happened?" "Papa absolutely refuses to advance the money for our travelling expenses."

"Popping" the Question.

"Did Miss Flyppe receive many proposals when she came out?" "Many? Why, receiving proposals got to be a habit with her. In a very short time she couldn't even hear a soda-water bottle pop without exclaiming 'This is so sudden!'"

Considerate Boy.

Stern Parent: "Your mother tells me you have been naughty again, and, therefore, I shall be obliged to punish you." Troublesome Son: "Wh—why can't ma punish me herself, dad? I don't s—ee wh—why you should have to d—do all the odd jobs!"

Speaking from Experience.

Mr. Hardnut: "I admit, sir, that my life has not been what it should be, but I truly and unselfishly love your daughter, and if ever I give her a moment's pain I hope I'll be made to suffer torture for it." Old Gentleman (warmly): "Oh, you will. You don't know her."

No More Love Letters of 'Liza.

She was doleful—oh, so very doleful. "John," she said, "I don't believe you ever really loved me at all." "Why?" he demanded. "Because," she replied, "I've been over all your old love letters, and while they seemed all right at the time, they actually aren't worth publishing in a book."

She Altered Her Decision.

"And so," said the young man, "you say you cannot marry me because I am too young?" "That is my reason," averred the girl. "Surely you do not mean me to understand that you consider yourself too old to marry me?" he murmured diplomatically. Looking at it in that light, she concluded that she had been too hasty.

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12/6 Magnificent 5-row Pearl Collarette; finest quality, mounted with four bars of lustrous Orient diamonds, in velvet-lined case.

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Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[*In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of* SHORT STORIES.]

The Morning Vision.

"H. S. I. F." writes, "I meet on the way to business every morning a young lady whom I much admire. I have not yet had courage to say more than 'good morning' to her. What is my best way to get into further conversation?"

* * * * *

If you have got so far as to say "good morning," I do not see why you should not take an early opportunity to remark on the weather. Then perhaps she travels by a certain train, or 'bus, in which you might accidentally find yourself sometimes. If you get so far as to be on speaking terms with her, you should try to get to know her relations. How to do that must depend on circumstances, and if you have any mutual friends. You will best be able to judge that yourself.

Too Effusive?

"DOUBTFUL" is very hard to please. She has kept company with a young man for three weeks, and finds him very demonstrative. He constantly goes to see her, and wishes her to become engaged to him. He is in a very good position, and his family are wealthy. This all seems most fortunate, yet "DOUBTFUL" is haunted by fears. "Can his affection," she asks, "be true and lasting, when he is so demonstrative? Would she be wise in becoming engaged to him?"

* * * * *

I do not see, "DOUBTFUL," why his affection should be any the less sincere because he seems able to show it visibly. Don't consent just yet to an engagement, as you evidently have not made up your mind whether or not you love him. Ask him to wait awhile and repeat the question later, when you will be more certain on the point. Three weeks is not a long time to have known him, and you should see how long his affectionate manner lasts.

Etiquette in Calling.

"I MET two very nice girls at a party recently," writes "EDWARD." "Their mother was present, but I was not introduced to her. We got very friendly, the girls and I, and on parting, one of them said to me: 'You must call and see us when in our direction,' giving me their address, which was in the country. Now is that a proper invitation, seeing that I do not know the mother?"

* * * * *

It would have been better if you had met the mother, and got the young lady to confirm the invitation in her presence. You could then have suggested a suitable day to call, if convenient to them, and made the arrangement on a formal social basis. As it is, you might find it awkward to call only on the girls' invitation, especially if they were not at home. In your present position, I should write to one girl, an ordinary chatty letter, and leave it to her to confirm the invitation on behalf of her mother.

Wanted, a Chaperon.

"LONELY BACHELOR" lives in rooms by himself. He knows several girls, but of course cannot invite them to tea, while he often visits them at their homes. How could he invite them to his home without breaking strict etiquette?

* * * * *

The best thing would be for my lonely correspondent to ask his sister, mother, or aunt to stay with him, and then to invite his lady friends when she is there. It would not, of course, be quite right for him to ask them without some such chaperon, though people who call themselves "Bohemians" have long ago discarded such formalities.

A Fickle Girl.

"JACK" had kept company with a girl for six months, and during that time found her everything that could be desired. After three months' courtship, however, she gradually seemed to change. He has since found out that she was constantly meeting other young men without his knowledge, and when he remonstrated with her, she passed it off as "mere jealousy on his part," and continued the intimacy with them. "JACK" now feels that he no longer loves her, but only likes her. He can no longer rely on her being true to him.

* * * * *

I imagine the girl has grown tired of you, "JACK," and that being the case, you had better let the matter drop. As you find you no longer love her yourself, I should cease to try to bind her, as she is evidently a bit of a flirt.

Should He Marry?

"T. L." writes: "I am a tradesman, earning 28s. a week during the summer, but my trade is very bad in the winter, when I only earn £1, and sometimes I am thrown idle. I have met a girl who is an orphan, and very poor, and I would wish to marry her. Should I ask her to wait till I am in a better position—perhaps a year?"

* * * * *

If she is not dependent on you for support, "T. L.," it would certainly be better not to marry until you are in a better position. But if the girl is very poor indeed, and you would have to help her in any case, I think you would find that it would be better to marry soon. With economy, you should be able to make both ends meet even on your winter income, and no doubt a good wife would help you to do so.

A Trivial Offence.

"SOME months ago," write "MARIE and MADELEINE," "we met two young men of our own age, and kept up an acquaintance with them for some time. They said they had no professions, and, without any intention of offending them, we said we thought every man ought to follow some profession. We think they must have taken offence at this, as their manner became very cool towards us both, and they now only bow and pass on when we meet them. Would it be forward for us to stop them and explain that we meant no offence? We both grew very fond of them, and they used to take us about a lot."

* * * * *

Yes, I think no harm whatever would be done in your speaking to them next time you meet. What you said was quite true—every man ought to have some occupation, and I don't think men who are absolutely idle ever make good husbands. If they were offended at your saying so, they must be very sensitive. However, explain your intentions by all means, and leave it to them as to whether they care to resume their intimacy with you. It seems a trifle to have separated you, in any case.

Cynthia

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2. *What famous British soldier is known as "Bobs"?*
3. *Who is your favourite hero (not fiction), and why?*
4. *Who made most runs in first-class cricket this summer?*
5. *Which is your favourite book, and why?*
6. *When was King Edward VII. born. Give year and day?*

The Second Set of Questions will appear in THE BOYS' LEADER (1d. every Tuesday), on Tuesday, November 10.

It will be noticed that some of the questions call for an expression of opinion only, and others you will have to search for in books.

Cut out and paste these questions on a sheet of foolscap paper numbering it No. 1. Write your reply to No 1. immediately below, and then follow with No. 2, and so on, saying in what book you found the information and who helped you to find it.

Anybody may help you provided you say who. No competitor must be over 21 years of age. No reply must exceed fifty words. Keep all replies until the last set appears and until we tell you to send them in. Write plainly in ink on one side of the paper.

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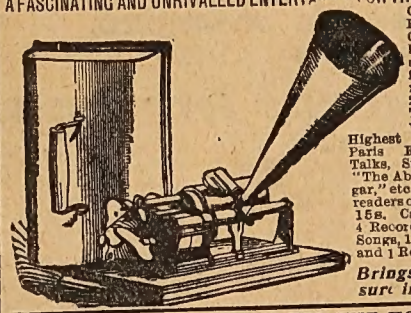

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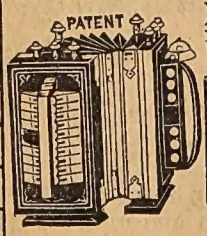

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